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HORACE VERNON;

OR,

Life in the West.

“Were we to take as much pains to *be* what we ought, as we do to disguise what we *are*, we might appear like ourselves, without being at the trouble of any disguise at all.”—ROCHEFOUCAULT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

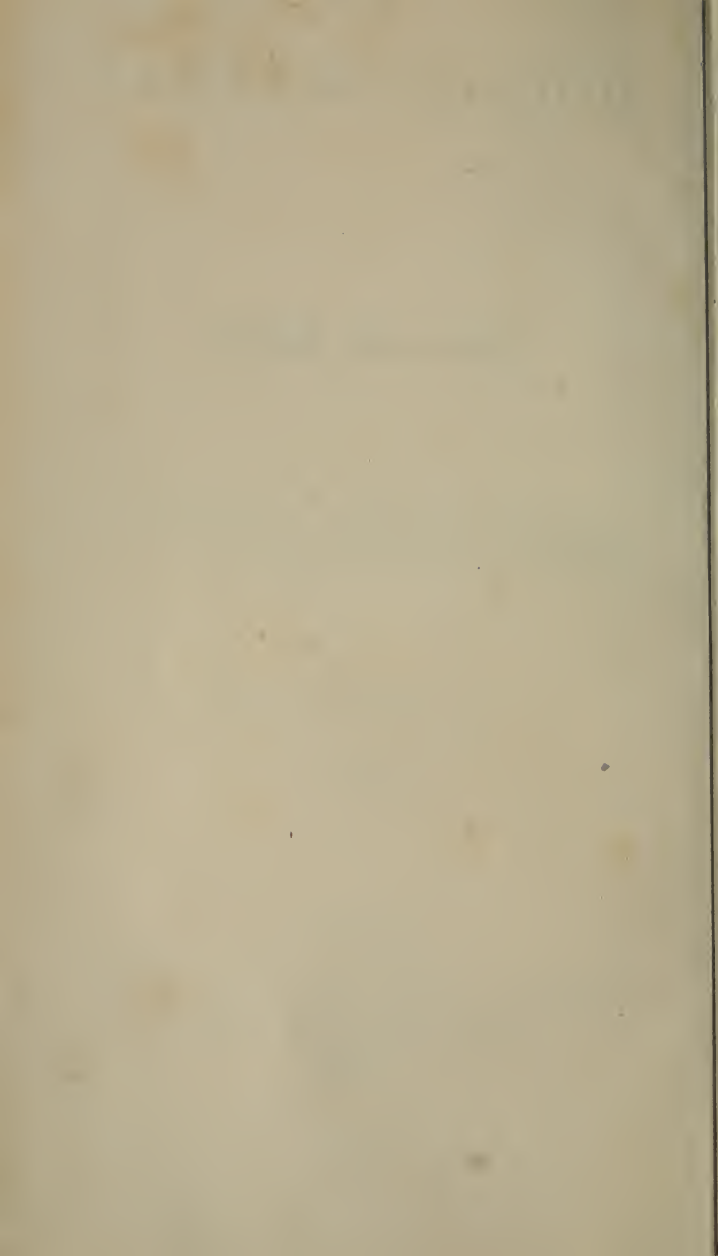
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HORACE VERNON.



CHAPTER I.

“ Fortune came smiling to my youth and woo’d it,
And purpled greatness met my ripen’d years.”

“ While yet we live, scarce one short hour perhaps,
Between us two let there be peace.”

It will doubtless be apparent to the reader, that Mr. Vernon is destined to occupy the most important place in our history. It will be unnecessary, therefore, to apologize for the brief outline of his earlier life, which will be found in this chapter.

Mr. Vernon was the only son of a person who had raised himself—or had been raised by merit or good fortune, or perhaps both—from

a subordinate situation in a banker's office, to the dignity of a partner in that respectable house. The origin of this gentleman had been very obscure; and it is hardly worth while, at this distance of time, to enlighten the world with respect to it; it may be remarked, however, that his elevation in life having been gradual, he imbibed imperceptibly that progressive degree of refinement which good fortune sometimes superinduces, and of which, in almost all cases, it compels its favourites to assume the outward show.

Mr. Vernon the elder was a man of strong natural sense, improved and fortified by a long commerce with the world; a perfect acquaintance with, and knowledge of which, however secluded sentimentalists and disappointed coxcombs may rail against it, is more efficacious in expanding the heart, and softening the affections, than all the musings amongst mountains, and loiterings in green lanes, that were ever undergone by selfishness turned sour, which is

sometimes called philanthropy. Mr. Vernon, accordingly, was one of those men who succeed in forming a right estimate of the world, and of themselves as portions of it; and although he lived in all respects as became a gentleman, yet he took care, at the same time, always to bear in mind that he was a man of business. But, to be a good man of business is by no means so easy a matter as some persons who “have a soul above it” may believe it to be; and although Mr. Vernon designed his son for a banker, he did not deem it necessary to make him a block-head; and although he knew it to be true enough, that the youthful mind does frequently imbibe false and mischievous impressions, yet he was of opinion that boys sometimes acquire impressions of an opposite character. Young Vernon was, therefore, consigned to one of our public schools, from whence, in due time, he emerged with the average amount of learning accorded to young men by those ancient and reputable foundations.

But although the old gentleman had taken uncommon and laudable pains to render his son duly qualified for the station in life he designed him to occupy, yet, on his first entrance into business, the young man appeared not unlikely to falsify any hopes that might have been entertained in his favour. It was not that he was destitute of the requisite capacity to perform the duties assigned to him; on the contrary, in a very short time he had acquired a perfect insight into all the details of a rather complicated business. But he exhibited no attachment—no devotion to that glorious art, or, rather, science, by which money is to be gotten,—a science which, as it is admitted by a majority of the world to be the most important, so, without question, it demands more attachment and devotion to it than any other.

The truth is, there were reasons for this, which had not been taken into account by the father. Young Vernon was, as we have said, an only son, and had met with that kind of treatment

from his parents which is usually extended to those favoured beings; that is to say, he had been so inordinately indulged in his childhood, that he very naturally conceived, that when he arrived at man's estate he was to be at perfect liberty to do as he pleased. He was also of a rather hasty and vehement temper, and at the same time weak, wayward and capricious; so that, although he would not brook control, he never persevered in any one course of vice or folly long enough to justify restraint. And, lastly, he had acquired so many school-friends, whose station in society was, or was supposed to be, superior to his own, and whose habits were irreconcilable with the rigid exactions of mercantile pursuits, that it can hardly be wondered at if, for a considerable period after his entrance into business, he found himself placed in a position which he felt to be irksome enough, and which he suspected was in no degree equal to his merits, or answerable to his pretensions.

It was, however, just at a time when his more assiduous attendance at the counting-house had begun to inspire renewed hopes of his amendment, that the father died, leaving his widow and two daughters handsomely provided for, and his son a half share in one of the most flourishing banking-houses in London.

It was upon this occasion that the better qualities of young Vernon were manifested. He was a man of violent feelings and of strong affections ; and the recent loss of one whose generosity and tenderness towards him he had, he felt, but ill requited, stimulated him to make the only reparation in his power, by supplying his father's place as the protector of his mother and sisters. It is true a guardianship, under the circumstances in which his family were placed, could be considered merely a matter of form ; but he knew that at such a moment even the appearance of affection was a consolation ; and as there is ever some degree of selfishness even in our best actions, so, whilst we give him

full credit for something better than the appearance of affection, we may readily believe that, by acting as he did, he felt himself more easily acquitted of his former dereliction.

Be this as it may, Vernon relinquished his chambers in the Albany,—renounced the pleasures of a fashionable life,—and for two years not only attended regularly at the banking-house, where he had become almost indispensable, but was, or appeared, perfectly happy in the enjoyment of that domestic comfort which the society of his own family was well calculated to afford, in an elegant mansion a few miles from London.

An opulent and respectable family can never be in a situation to complain of the want of the best society which the county can offer; nor is Surrey, that we are aware of, less disposed than any other county to encourage that degree of friendly intercourse which pervades all civilized and polite communities. Nor was it at all likely that a young gentleman of Mr. Vernon's

desirable acquirements (amongst which his pecuniary qualities were, perhaps, not forgotten) should be overlooked by those provident and anxious mothers who chanced to possess daughters in all respects unexceptionable. On the contrary, so strong an impression had the banker succeeded in making upon the minds of these careful and disinterested females, that, but for the untoward and vexatious practice that has by some means obtained, of a gentleman being permitted to make his own election in such matters, Mr. Vernon would have been converted, long ago, into one of the happiest husbands in the county, to half the young ladies in the neighbourhood.

There was, indeed, one young lady towards whom Vernon had, upon several occasions, turned an eye of no very equivocal expression. Miss Marshall was the only child of a lady of large fortune, residing in the immediate vicinity; and was not only gifted with extraordinary personal attractions, but also with a perfect

knowledge of them. It will hardly be deemed a matter of much surprise, therefore, that Miss Marshall entertained a strong belief, not only that beauty was one of the most precious gifts of heaven, but that it should be exerted accordingly; and so great had been her success in sentimental speculations, that she owned as many slaves as a West India planter formerly possessed, and was quite as unwilling to emancipate them. To say that Miss Marshall was indifferent to the attentions of Vernon, which he now began to pay with some assiduity, were to be unjust to the young lady: her vanity had been gratified by the homage offered to her charms, but her heart was not yet touched by it. To say the truth, the hearts of a small portion of the fair sex are only to be effectually moved, by a strong siege laid to their vanity; and Vernon was not the man to apply to such means of obtaining the affections of young ladies, being possessed of too much of that commodity in his own person.

But although some men (and Vernon, as we have said, was amongst them) are afflicted with the foolish weakness of vanity, yet it must be conceded, that it is not so virulent a disease in the male sex,—that it is not so inordinate in its cravings, and that it is more easily satisfied. If, therefore, the lady was gratified by the attentions of Vernon, he was delighted and enraptured by the condescension of Miss Marshall; and in a few months an offer of marriage and its acceptance loosened the “bonds of secrecy” (they had not been altogether tongue-tied before)—of friends, relations and neighbours, who now spoke openly and without reserve of the impending marriage, which had for some time past been “mentioned in Gath, and whispered in the streets of Ascalon.”

Amongst others of his friends, to whom Vernon, with some degree of ostentatious admiration, introduced his intended bride, was Mr. Livingstone. This gentleman was a merchant

of the highest respectability in the City, about Vernon's age, and with pursuits similar to his own. There had always existed a degree of acquaintance akin to friendship between the two; and if there were, indeed, no real friendship between them, it was because one of the parties was incapable of the sentiment.

Mr. Livingstone was one of those men whose selfishness is so refined that it becomes invested with almost an air of romance. He possessed that fashionable egotism which is supposed to indicate aristocratical pretensions; and, indeed, the selfishness to which we allude is as much the symbol of gentility now-a-days, as the appearance of a gibbet was an evidence to the traveller that he had at last arrived in a civilized country. Reduced to his elements, Mr. Livingstone would have presented the materials of a very common person; but they were "so mixed in him," that nature might *not* "stand up, and say to all the world,—‘This is a man,’"—but might rather be compelled to raise the question, and wonder

“whether he can be called a man at all.” And yet this gentleman had acquired the art of obtaining credit for feeling, by openly ridiculing it,—for sentiment, which he protested was his aversion,—for reading, because he could not bear the sight of a book,—and for talent, because he hated those prosing bores called men of genius. He was also a vast favourite with the ladies, on the strength of his avowed indifference to the fair sex, whose charms he affected to consider no fascination in his eyes, and whose intellectual pretensions, he said (and perhaps he was sincere in this instance) he despised.

We are about to enter upon a very ordinary case, and yet we do not altogether recognise the necessity of heightening its effect by employing tints or laying on shadows which do not belong to the picture. It is commonly said of a certain illustrious personage, that even he should not be painted blacker than he is,—a caution the less necessary, since, if report speak true, the old gentleman is black enough already. Li-

Livingstone was neither a hero nor a monster of romance. He was, as we have intimated, a creature, and, indeed, *the* creature, of selfishness,—a word, it must be admitted, which includes any conceivable amount of baseness ; but in Livingstone's case, his selfishness was perfectly unconscious,—it was a portion of himself,—it was his nature ; nor is it wonderful that he acted in accordance with its dictates. He did not, in the first instance, form any plan, or invent a stratagem, to supplant his friend Vernon in the affections of Miss Marshall. It was impossible that he should not perceive, after a short acquaintance, that the lady was, to say the least, partial to his society, and that Vernon's company was frequently the cause of a degree of restraint on her part. As acquaintance ripened into intimacy, Livingstone, although a shallow reasoner, and by no means versed in the art of drawing out a character, like a telescope, and seeing through it at pleasure, could not fail to observe that Miss Marshall was not exactly the person

to make a man like Vernon happy; and he at length arrived at the conclusion, that she was precisely the woman to render himself perfectly so; a conclusion to which he arrived the more readily, it may easily be believed, when he remembered the large fortune she was certain to bring with her. He reminded himself, finally, that the engagement between his friend and the lady was not so far advanced, but that circumstances might concur, or be made to concur, to break it.

It may appear astonishing, but it is nevertheless frequently the case, that, in matters in which a man may be supposed to be most interested, he exhibits no vigilance at all; and it sometimes happens, that where the greatest confidence is placed, and where, consequently, a man would least look for its abuse, it is betrayed. It is unimportant to enquire whether there was too little vigilance on the part of Vernon, or too much deception in the other party: certain it is, that the banker remained,

and was permitted to remain, for a considerable period, in a state of the most blessed ignorance of the flirtation, to call it by an innocent name, which had, for some time past, been carried on between Livingstone and his intended wife ; and it was only by accident that he obtained a clue to this proceeding.

He was accosted one day suddenly in the street, by his friend Mr. Moore, a gentleman who prided himself, more than on any other virtue he possessed, (and he really possessed many virtues), upon his love of speaking the truth ; in other words, he granted himself the privilege of saying whatever he pleased, particularly facts, or any thing he believed to be founded on fact.

“ Ha, Vernon, glad to see you,” said Moore, shaking him by the hand ; “ well, how goes on the marriage ?—when is it to be ? ”

“ I am to be made the happiest fellow in England in about a month.”

“ Are you, indeed ?—glad to hear it—but

are you, though?—why you don't often visit there now—I've not seen you there lately, and I've dropt in several times during the last month."

"Why, no," said Vernon. "The fact is, business has monopolized my time, the last month or two, completely."

"You men of business are the strangest lovers," returned Moore: "no time for sighs, and sentimental flights:—raising the wind, and flying kites, more profitable, eh?—moonlight all sunshine—Capel Court the only sensible courtship. Do these matters by proxy, eh?"

Vernon smiled. "What do you mean by doing these matters by proxy, Mr. Moore?"

"Why, there's Livingstone always at the house," said Moore; "and he's one of your men of business, too: his time is monopolized, at all events."

"Mr. Livingstone is a particular friend of mine," said Vernon, with some seriousness.

"Then, 'pon my life, Vernon," cried Moore,

bluntly, “ I should not like to be afflicted with so particular a friend. There he is, seated by the side of your wife—that is to be—or that may be—chattering, and grinning, and whispering ; and, ‘ Oh ! you wicked creature, you,’ says the lady, and taps him on the knuckles with her fan : or, ‘ how *can* you say so ?’—or, ‘ what a man you are !’——Egad ! I would soon let him see what a man I was—but, no matter.—”

There was something in the manner of Moore, more particularly in his mimicry of Miss Marshall, that grated somewhat harshly upon Vernon’s feelings ; nor was the substance of his communication, and the degree of suspicion implied in it, by any means of a soothing nature.

“ Livingstone has certainly the art of rendering himself very agreeable to the ladies,” said Vernon, after a pause.

“ An art, from whose influence I should wish my future wife to be exempted,” re-

turned Moore. "And, to tell you the truth, Vernon," he continued, "the thing is talked about."

"How!—talked about!—who talks?—and about what?" asked Vernon, in surprise.

"I'll tell you," said the other. "The fact is, I got implicated—mixed up with—involved amongst—a parcel of old ladies the other night at a party,—and such a heat of tongues was never run before, I do firmly believe—and all for your cup of happiness, it appeared. How strange—unaccountable—indecent—that a lady who had accepted the proposals of one gentleman should openly—(indeed, I think it is done purposely)—prefer the society, and receive the attentions, of another."

"This is very extraordinary," said Vernon, biting his lip, "and, upon my soul, Moore, I am greatly obliged to you for your communication."

"Communication! I made none, surely; but, however, when a lady is about to be

married, there is no occasion for volumes being spoken, or books written concerning it ; and, if I were you, I'd see this matter set to rights. If I can be of any service, command me."

"How?" said Vernon, vaguely.

"You may want me," said Moore, carelessly. And shaking Vernon once more by the hand, he left him to retrace his steps to the banking-house, in a condition of mind not greatly to be envied.

A state of suspense was, in Vernon's younger years, a state of all others the most insupportable. He knew, however, that his friend Moore was a man very much in the habit of jumping, or rather of flying, at conclusions, and that, during such flights, he frequently overlooked many important circumstances ; so that, upon the whole, he was not disposed to yield implicit faith to the constructive guilt of the two other parties concerned, implied by his worthy acquaintance. He resolved, however,

upon watching their future proceedings with a diligent eye, and, as he was to dine with the Marshalls on that very evening, a speedy opportunity was afforded him of doing so. But first he took his elder sister aside, whom he had always been accustomed to consult upon every affair of moment, and imparted to her just so much of his doubt, as to Miss Marshall's perfect propriety of conduct under their mutual engagement, as might draw from her an opinion upon the point; and he succeeded in converting his doubts into fears, and, before the close of the evening, his fears into certainty.

To say that Vernon had ever been what is commonly termed in love with Miss Marshall, were, perhaps, to say too much. He had been fascinated by her beauty, and gratified beyond measure by her apparent preference of himself; and if, upon this occasion, his vanity rather than his love was wounded, who is so ignorant of human nature as not to know that

a wound inflicted upon the former is more poignant, whilst it remains unhealed, than any injury that love can sustain.

It is needless to say, that the more Vernon considered his present situation—if, indeed, he could be said to consider it at all, his mind being altogether swayed by tumultuous passions—the more aggravated and heinous appeared the conduct of Livingstone and Miss Marshall. The one, after accepting his hand, openly exhibited a preference for another man—his friend—who had succeeded in estranging her affections from himself, knowing that she was engaged, and never having seen her previous to such engagement. Had Livingstone seen and loved her before he had himself offered, he thought he could have forgiven his conduct since. This is, by the way, the common mistake made upon occasions where forgiveness might be most gracefully extended. Had the facts been otherwise, which is to say, had there been no such cause, I could have

pardoned; but, as it is—. Vernon was the man to make these mistakes of feeling.

His first resolution was to renounce all claim to the hand of the lady; and his next, to call his friend Livingstone to account for his baseness. An opportunity of effecting the former presented itself on the following day. The Marshalls were engaged to dine with his family on that evening, and the old lady came alone, apologizing for the absence of her daughter, who had been detained at home by sudden, but, it was hoped, not serious indisposition. Vernon accordingly made an excuse to the company for quitting them for a short time, and made the best of his way to the house of Mrs. Marshall, concocting, as he proceeded, the order of his reproaches, and the fittest terms of indignation to express his sense of the young lady's unworthiness, and, at the same time, to show the perfect indifference with which he could bear being made the subject, although not the victim, of it.

He had entered the garden, and was approaching the window of a drawing-room which opened upon a lawn at the back of the house—an apartment in which it was Miss Marshall's frequent custom of an evening to sit—when the sound of his own name attracted his attention. Urged by a curiosity which he did not at that moment feel the necessity of repressing, he approached one side of the window unperceived, and awaited with breathless anxiety a renewal of the conversation. A silence ensued of some minutes' duration.

“My dearest Emily,”—it was the voice of Livingstone—“why defer making this communication? Every day increases the difficulty of breaking off the match with grace.”

“I think I must do so,” said the lady. “And yet, Harry, I do really feel for the poor fellow. What reason can I allege for this proceeding, that will not inevitably distress him beyond measure?”

“How easy to say,” replied Livingstone

“that, upon re-consideration of the rash promise you made him, and after a farther insight into his character, you do not believe you are the woman to render him happy.”

“It must be so at last, I know,” said Miss Marshall; “I do pity the man, certainly; but then I must pity any man in so unhappy a state. He loves me, I am sure of that. Don’t you think it will break his heart?”

Vernon saw the smile that played for a moment on the lip of his friend.

“My dear girl,” said he, “we all know how difficult it is to persuade a lady that any heart can survive her rejection of it. But no, Vernon is not the man you mistake him for. He break his heart! He’d break Cupid’s head for suspecting him of such folly. He loves himself too well to care much for any one else. Indeed, if I thought otherwise—”

“How, sir!” cried Miss Marshall, with mock solemnity, “beware how you make protestations of friendship which cast a slight

upon the sovereign power of love. If you thought otherwise, what then?"

"It was rashly spoken, I acknowledge," said Livingstone, in a soft and insinuating tone. "What was the extent of his love compared to mine? and if that can make me deserving of you—"

Vernon heard no more. A sudden sickness came over him, and his frame was shaken by some strong and violent emotion. Should he rush at once into the room, and upbraid them for their perfidy? No, no, that were poor and insufficient satisfaction. He dashed his hand into his coat-pocket. Fool that he was to have forgotten them, when he might have known—when he was sure—he should want them! Filled with these and similar half-engendered thoughts, he retired hastily from the garden, and arrived in a few minutes at his own house.

"James," said he, hurriedly, as a servant opened the door, "be sure you say nothing

to anybody that I am returned. I am going out again for a short time."

So saying, he snatched a candle from the slab, and ran up stairs to his own room. He descended almost immediately, and leaving the house, soon found himself once more at the drawing-room window.

They were still there, but were seated at a small table at the further end of the room. Their backs were towards the window, and they were talking in a low but earnest tone. Vernon entered the room silently, and approaching, laid one hand gently on the shoulder of each.

The cry of momentary terror which burst from Miss Marshall, as the two sprang to their feet, was succeeded by a violent trembling, when she recognised her unexpected visitor. Nor did the countenance and manner of Mr. Livingstone indicate any remarkable pleasure at the sudden appearance of his friend.

"Lord ! how you frightened us," said Miss

Marshall, and then, assuming a careless air, which she could not very plausibly sustain, she added—"I declare you have made me quite ill. It was cruel of you to surprise us thus."

"It *was* cruel," said Vernon, with forced calmness; "but it is unfair of Miss Marshall to attribute her illness to that circumstance. We heard that you were indisposed, and, to say the truth, your looks do not belie the report. Pray be seated."

"*You* do not look quite the thing, to-night, Vernon," said Livingstone, with a view to prolong general topics as much as possible: "what's the matter? what has occurred?"

"Nothing, nothing," answered Vernon; "a very common case, I believe. Nor can I flatter you upon your looks, Livingstone."

"Mr. Livingstone has not been well," remarked Miss Marshall.

"Indeed!" said Vernon. "Then it was imprudent in him to have ventured out—the night-air is decidedly not to be recommended ;

but sympathy, madam—congenial souls—the company of Miss Marshall—”

“Pshaw ! how you talk !” said the lady.

“But, come,” resumed Vernon, turning suddenly towards his friend, “I want a few words with you, Livingstone, in private and immediately. Can you accompany me?”

“With pleasure,” replied Livingstone, who began to feel the awkwardness of his own situation, and perhaps to suspect that the situation of the lady was at that moment far from pleasant. “I was about to take my leave of Miss Marshall when you entered.”

“Come, then,” said Vernon, and he walked towards the window.

“Will you not say good night, Horace?” said Miss Marshall, in a tender, but half-reproachful tone ; and, as Vernon turned, she approached him with her hands extended. Could it be possible ? There *were* tears in her eyes.

Vernon grasped her offered hand between

his own. "I will not say 'Good night!' madam, but 'Farewell!' To-morrow morning," he continued, in a lower tone, "you shall hear from me. You will then learn what I mean, when I say 'Farewell!' But, come, Livingstone, are you ready?"

"Perfectly; I am waiting." And, with a hasty adieu to Miss Marshall, Livingstone took his friend's arm, and they departed.

"We had better walk apart, I think," said Vernon, as he shook Livingstone's arm somewhat roughly from him.

"As you please," said Livingstone; and they proceeded for a few minutes in silence.

Livingstone was the first to break the awkward pause which had ensued. "What can be the matter with you to-night, my boy?" said he, with assumed gaiety.

"You shall learn immediately," answered Vernon, as he stopped at the door of a small inn by the roadside, at which he knocked for admittance.

Livingstone hesitated. It was now for the first time that a suspicion crossed his mind that Vernon had something serious to impart to him ; in other words, that he was about to take that opportunity of reproaching him for his baseness.

“Come in,” said Vernon, as the landlord opened the door. “I shall not detain you long here, I promise you. Here, Mills, show this gentleman and myself into a private room for a few minutes. Send us up some brandy and water.”

“Your honour, I’m afraid,” said Mills, who was Vernon’s tenant, “will hardly find my accommodation to your liking ; but, if so be as you don’t mind it—leastways—”

“It will do, I dare say,” said Vernon, and he led the way up stairs into a small room ; whilst Mills, with alacrity—the common virtue of landlords when gentlemen are to be served—mixed the brandy and water, which he soon placed upon the table. With a low bow he

withdrew, and left the “nobs,” as he called them, to themselves.

“Livingstone,” said Vernon, when they were seated, “you look pale. I think you guess what I am about to say to you.”

“Indeed—I—I do not altogether apprehend—” faltered the other.

“Well, well, no matter,” resumed Vernon; “I did not bring you here to bandy names with you. My habits of business, also, have taught me to employ few words; nor will I ascribe more to a wrong like this, than is justly chargeable to it. I was engaged to Miss Marshall—we were to have been married. I introduced her to you, as my future wife. You had never seen her before. You practised to supplant, and you have supplanted me. Is not this true? I know it to be so. I overheard your conversation with her this evening. What say you?”

This was spoken calmly—almost softly, and in a half whisper; but Livingstone knew the

speaker too well not to be aware that it was a most deceitful calm ; and, although he possessed an intrepidity of face, almost superhuman, he could not withstand the fixed and serene glance with which Vernon, whilst he awaited his answer, scrutinized his very (and very small) soul. He felt, however, that he must now go through it as well as possible, and forthwith prepared to assume a fitting face for the occasion.

“ My dear Vernon,” said he, with an air of almost abject humility, “ I acknowledge it all. I have been—we both have been—guilty of the greatest duplicity : but, upon my honour, my intentions were from the first honourable—or, rather, I had no intentions in the first instance. We have been betrayed : but, if my unfeigned sorrow for a weakness—I will not call it a wickedness—”

“ You will not call it so, Mr. Livingstone, doubtless,” interrupted Vernon. “ ‘ All wicked-

ness is weakness,' says one of our poets, and you seem to hold the same opinion."

"What reparation can I make?" said Livingstone.

"You can—one," said Vernon, quickly.

"What is it?"

"You shall see it. You can make it, Livingstone, and you shall," and Vernon placed his hand in his pocket, and drew forth a brace of pistols, which he laid upon the table.

"My dear Vernon," cried Livingstone, and he made an instinctive snatch at the bell-rope, "what, in Heaven's name, do you mean?"

"You had best not stir, or call for assistance," cried Vernon, rising, "or I'll send a bullet through your brain instantly—I will, by G—d! Come here, sir," and he led Livingstone to the table. "Take one of these pistols; stand here; I will stand at the other end of the table; you, yourself shall give the signal to fire. You hesitate; what now?"

Livingstone closed his eyes, and turned his

face from the deadly weapons that lay before him. Livingstone was one of those men who professed to "fear God, and honour the king;" and who, without professing it, feared others, and honoured himself.

"I will not fight with you," said he, after a pause.

"I was too hasty, perhaps," said Vernon. "You require witnesses? To-morrow morning, with friends—will that suit you?"

"What need of fighting?" cried Livingstone, imploringly. "My dear sir, if any apology I can make will be acceptable to your feelings—if any other reparation—"

He paused, for Vernon was replacing the pistols in his pocket. "Have you done, Livingstone?" he inquired.

"I was saying—"

"Wretch!" and Vernon, buttoning his coat, approached him. "And you think I am to put up with a damning injury like this, and to be put off with idle talk about repara-

tion, apology, satisfaction ! Will you meet me ?”

“ I will not.”

“ You dare not ?”

Livingstone was silent.

“ Once more : will you fight me ?”

“ No.”

The word had scarce passed his lips, when a violent blow on the face struck him senseless to the earth.

The landlord burst into the room at the moment, and beheld Vernon standing over the prostrate body of his companion. He grasped him by the arm suddenly.

“ You are right,” said Vernon, turning to Mills ; “ take me away from this creature. I dare not longer trust myself with him. Take proper care of him, and when he is well enough, let him go back to his friends.”

The next morning, Vernon dispatched a letter to Miss Marshall, renouncing her hand, and transferring it to the more congenial cus-

tody of Mr. Livingstone; and, it may be as well to say that, in a few months, this deserving couple were united.

It was about three years after this event occurred, that Vernon, from one of the most sedate and assiduous men of business in the city, became one of the most reckless and dissolute of gentlemen at the west end. He became connected with Mrs. Maxwell, who, of all the women to whom he had ever paid any serious attentions, best knew the art of retaining and maintaining her hold upon his affections; and that art was the very simple one of alternately flattering and piquing his vanity; so ordering her course of mental treatment, that the zest was administered at the very moment when the soothing was beginning to cloy. And in this state of voluntary bondage, must Mr. Vernon be considered to have been, at the period of his mother's death.

CHAPTER II.

“ He minds not
That some good trusty brother of the *trade*
Has done for him what he has done for thousands.”

“ He is so full of pleasant anecdote,
So rich, so gay, so piquant in his wit.”

ON the morning after the party we have recorded at Mrs. Maxwell's, Lord Walgrave was seated at the breakfast-table in his own apartments, in St. James's-place. The breakfast had been scarcely touched, and not a line of the *Morning Post*—which he held in his hand—had he read; for, at that moment, his private affairs evidently were more interesting to him than those of the public. It was during this mood of abstraction, of calculation, or

whatever it might have been, that his intimate friend, Colonel Summers, entered—a gentleman something passed the hey-day of youth, well known in the play and fashionable world, and accustomed to the duties of private secretaryship.

“Ha! Summers, is that you?” said his lordship, listlessly raising his eyes from the carpet, the pattern of which he had been apparently studying for the last half hour. “But what is the matter, eh? Something gone wrong last night?”

“You have guessed it,” said the colonel, who had thrown himself into a chair opposite to Lord Walgrave, and whose countenance bespoke but little rest on the previous night. “I lost 2,000*l.* last night; a year’s income, by G—d!”

“It serves you right,” returned his friend; “I told you not to go amongst those fellows. You are clever in some things, Summers, but depend on it, you are no match for them. I knew perfectly well what was going on, and I

told you. I thought that would have been sufficient."

"It ought to have been so," said Summers ;
"and I don't know how it was that I came to be lugged into it. I must have been half drunk, I suppose."

"It is the only excuse you have," returned Lord Walgrave. "To allow yourself to be taken in, when you knew what was passing, I hold to be disgraceful to a man of your talent and experience."

"You are quite right, Walgrave," acknowledged the colonel ; "it's a disgraceful piece of business, and I must make somebody pay for it—that's all. But, I understand, you made a hit, last night ; I came to hear all about it. Vanely said something at the club, this morning, about your tickling the banker."

"Yes," replied his lordship, "the amount was rather large, and, to tell you the truth, I had no notion of anything of the sort till I was down there, or I would have taken you

with me; you might as well have been in it."

"How was it that Vanely was out?" asked the colonel.

"Why, he had no idea, any more than myself, that it would turn up as it did," replied Lord Walgrave, "and he put Clively into it. Robinson made up the set."

"A valuable fellow, that Robinson," observed the colonel; "one of your smooth-tongued scoundrels, that sets everything to rights. He made up your quarrel, did he not?"

"He is a useful fellow in his way," said Walgrave. "He sent a written apology from Vernon, shortly after they left the house, in which he attributed his offensive language to excess of wine and over-excitement, and, of course, the affair finished."

"That is as it should be," returned Summers; "but they say it will completely do up the poor banker."

“I hope not,” said Walgrave, with some show of feeling; “I thought he was rich.”

“So he was,” replied the other, “but he has been hit hard many times; besides, the ‘old one,’ down at Englefield Green, has been rather too hard upon him.”

“I’m sorry for it, upon my life,” said Walgrave; “he seems a decent sort of fellow, and it’s a pity to run a man to death. In fact, I would willingly have backed out last night, if I could have done so, when I saw things were likely to be serious; but he must have been mad, I believe, for he literally forced it upon me, by doubling his bets, and then, of course, I was obliged to look to myself. I told Robinson to settle accounts with him, and to make it as easy as possible.”

“But, after all, Walgrave, barring this *coup* of last night, play, now-a-days, is but a sort of chandler’s-shop practice,” said Colonel Summers, looking up to the ceiling, as if he could trace there the glories of by-gone years. “I

remember—let me see—it must be some twelve or fifteen years ago, when I and Vanely called upon you the morning after we touched the ‘Golden Ball,’ as they called him, for fourteen thousand !”

“Ah, I remember it,” said Walgrave ;
“what is become of that poor devil ?”

“Somewhere abroad, I believe, living upon his wife’s jointure,” replied Neville. “But, in those days, you were rather squeamish, Walgrave ; the bright eyes of Madame R—— de B—— unsettled you. Shuffling a pack had no charm for you then.”

Lord Walgrave sighed, as if he wished it had none now.

“However,” continued Summers, “you have at last arrived at years of discretion. But, joking apart, Walgrave, talking of that, we are all of us getting d—d old, and that’s the fact ; twelve or fifteen years makes all the difference with men at our time of life.”

“At our time of life !” repeated Walgrave,

laughing ; for he was something younger than his friend.

“ Well, well, I may have a trifle the start of you, but not much,” said Summers. “ But I hear you are sadly troubled with a cough, eh ? what’s the cause of that ? ”

A slight colour rose to Lord Walgrave’s face as Colonel Summers made this inquiry ; but it passed in a moment, and he was about to answer, when Lord Vanely was announced.

“ I was saying, Vanely, that we are all of us getting devilish old,” said Summers, accosting the nobleman who entered, without giving him time to say a word.

“ Yes ; and some of us are getting devilish foolish with it,” returned the peer.

“ If you mean my last night’s exploit,” said Summers, “ I must admit it was not the act of a Solomon. But what is going forward amongst you to-day. You said something about a drive out of town, Vanely.”

“ We are going to Greenwich,” answered

Vanely ; Walgrave drives me down. You can join us, if you like, at the Crown and Sceptre, at six o'clock."

"With all my heart," said Summers. "Who are your party?"

"It is Walgrave's affair," replied Vanely ; "at least so far as the women are concerned."

"Merely a little treat to the 'old one,' as you call her," said Lord Walgrave. "She suggested it last night, after the broil was arranged. She will take some one or two of her own friends, and Hopetown is to drive them down. Those who were present, and who like to join us, find their way as they please. I believe they will most of them be there, but the old Duke and the Agriculturalist."

"You can go down with Vauxhall, if you like," said Lord Vanely ; "he wanted to entice me, but I am going with Walgrave."

"Thank ye!—that would be too great a treat," said Summers. "By the way, when does that wiseacre go Quixotting to Spain? It is

quite time he went, for he is becoming a monstrous bore."

"I suppose he is waiting for the fighting to subside a little, lest he should get his wig singed; and that would be a pity," observed Lord Vanelly; "but, come, Walgrave, it is time for you to dress. We can walk down to Crockford's, and Jackson can send the cab after us."

Lord Walgrave was not long in making himself ready for the drive, and the companions then strolled to the Club, where their arrangements for Greenwich were completed.

CHAPTER III.

“ Fill high the bowl, the rich repast prepare.”

“ But come thou goddess, fair and free,
In heav’n yclep’d Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth.”

GREENWICH is a locality which has contrived, fortunately for its interest, to create a most profitable renown for skilful culinary operations upon fish ; and assuredly it requires all the delicate attraction of eels and white-bait to beguile a party through Lambeth-Marsh, Newington-Butts, and five miles extent of houses, all looking alike, and apparently interminable, to Deptford. And then the spot on which fashion has set her seal—the far-famed Crown and Sceptre—at

the end of a narrow miry lane !—never were regalia placed in so humiliating a position. However, if people like the place, and think it very charming, and so forth—why it is no affair of ours. It is merely our duty, in the course of this true history, to narrate facts just as we have found them, and leave parties to the quiet indulgence of their own peculiar tastes.

It was nearly six o'clock when the party assembled in the large room of the Crown and Sceptre, at Greenwich. It consisted of many of the same individuals who were introduced to the reader at Englefield Green, with the exception of the corpulent Duke and the Agriculturalist, as the Marquis of Marigold was familiarly termed. The Hon. Mr. Scampington could not go, as he was engaged to settle the preliminaries of a steeple chase. Robinson was likewise absent. Summers was an addition, and Mrs. Maxwell had brought with her a young person of genteel appearance, a Miss Somerton, an aspirant for theatrical fame, and who

was then studying the vocal art, preparatory to her *debut* at Covent Garden. The hon. Colonel Hopetown had introduced a Madame Stuls, a German milliner, and her daughter, to Mrs. Maxwell, and had the honour to drive them down. Lord Vauxhall brought down Lord Crowther, and the Colonel his brother, the sons of a peer, and members for a northern county. They were both great men in their way.

The day was very fine, and everybody was in the highest spirits imaginable; and the boiled, fried, and stewed fish, was ushered in by the numerous waiters, amidst a scene of universal contentment. The window commanded an extensive view of the mud of the Thames, and the urchins disporting themselves therein; which interesting subject had been a fruitful source of merriment, until the arrival of that still more interesting feature of the entertainment—the dinner. The table was covered in a trice by a whole army of waiters, and every thing was declared excellent, as is usual with those who are

in sufficiently good spirits to determine beforehand, if not to approve, at least, not to find fault with any thing.

Notwithstanding all these incentives to hilarity, the party was, comparatively, a dull one. Lord Vanely, whose wit and talent were sufficient at any time to redeem the dullness of any party, evidently did not think it worth while to exert himself. Excepting Lord Walgrave and Summers, who were his intimate associates, no one seemed to possess sufficient interest with him to divert his attention from the table. With the former he occasionally exchanged a word—took a glass of wine with Mrs. Maxwell—nodded approbation to sundry remarks on the dishes—and little else did the peer condescend during the repast. This indifference of Lord Vanely gave a flat tone to the whole; for Lord Walgrave was by no means in good spirits, and Summers was still thinking of his losses of the previous evening. The ladies too, except Mrs. Maxwell, were un-

der some little constraint, as they were strangers to many of the party.

The appearance of the dessert was, therefore, hailed by most as a considerable relief; and, dispensing with etiquette on such an occasion, the windows were opened, and the ladies seated themselves near, to seek amusement from the antics of the mud tritons. In this diversion they were joined by the greater portion of their noble entertainers, and Lord Crowther—statesman and philosopher though he was—amused himself by jerking pieces of pine-apple into the mouths of the mud urchins, with that remarkable precision only attainable by men of comprehensive minds, who condescend to direct their talent into small channels. His lordship had evidently been at considerable pains to perfect himself in this interesting but minor branch of art. Lord Vauxhall, jealous of his noble friend's popularity, essayed his skill with less costly missives, and also with much less success; for an unfortunate pippin from his unpractised

hand suddenly extracted two front teeth from a begrimed urchin, whose loud cries and bitter complaints drew from their different hiding-places sundry amphibious amazons, whose rising indignation Lord Vauxhall thought it wise to calm by a judicious outlay of two sovereigns. This *contretemps* checked the sport; and Lord Crowther wore his laurels with that unobtrusive magnanimity peculiar to a great mind.

In the mean time, the ladies, for whose especial benefit the excursion was made, seemed to be left to their own resources. Mrs. Maxwell, however, was sufficiently engaged with the conversation of Mrs. Stuls, whose varied knowledge and experience in life she could well appreciate; whilst the younger ladies were spared the infliction of their own society on each other exclusively, by the delicate attentions of Colonel Leonard Hopetown, who was obviously trying the battery of his ample whiskers and well blacked mustaches upon the susceptible heart of the young aspirant to theatrical fame. His se-

ductive powers, however, rested entirely with his capillary ornament; for his conversational resources were so scanty, that the eyes of the young ladies wandered listlessly over the river, and along the drowsy perspective of coal-barges, in a vain attempt to beguile the weariness of the “silent system,” of which they, poor things! without having committed any adequate offence, were made the innocent victims.

The more mature ladies were, as we said, quite independent of the talents of their noble friends. Mrs. Maxwell was highly amused at the shrewd observations of her new German friend, who seemed to know something of everybody, and was in no way desirous to keep such knowledge to herself. She was a good-looking woman, of about six-and-forty, but so well dressed, and moreover, so well “made up,” that she looked full ten years younger. Her attractions, though on the wane, were not past; for we have the word of the Hon. Col. Leonard Hopetown—a high authority in these matters,—

who declared, to use his own polished language, that “he would rather have the old German woman than her daughter”—although the latter was by no means an unattractive young person. Mrs. Stuls was likewise gifted with a tongue which she knew how to use judiciously—a rare advantage for a woman. Her pronunciation of English was a little faulty, but it gave a piquancy to her language; and she could be, when she chose—that is to say, when she had any object to answer—both persuasive and pleasing. She had a high connexion amongst the female nobility, to whom she sold the choicer articles of Parisian fashion, and encouraged the equivocal visits of noblemen at her house, in the hope, as she said, of finding “a suitable *parti* for her dear girl.” The young lady, however, if we might judge from the present occasion, had nothing to fear from the precipitancy of her admirers.

“And so you have known these Crowthers some time?” said Mrs. Maxwell.

“ O yes; dey come to my house ver frequently,” replied Mrs. Stuls. “ Lord Crowther is one good sort of man; but he is odd, and ver conceited, and always goes home at eleven o’clock.”

“ At eleven o’clock!—what’s that for?” asked Mrs. Maxwell.

“ To go to bed!” said the other, laughing; “ he leave every body to go to bed; he say he will not keep out of a bed past eleven o’clock, to please *sa majesté*.”

“ What an odd fancy!” remarked Mrs. Maxwell. “ And the Colonel—what sort of a person is he?”

“ Oh, he is one great bore!” said Mrs. Stuls, endeavouring to conceal a yawn, which the very thought occasioned; “ he is nobody; but they are of a great, rich famille,—and so, my dear, we must be civil, you know.”

“ Well, I never could put up with a bore—let his family be what it might,” said Mrs. Maxwell, whose natural irritability of temper

always overcame her artifice on minor points, and gained her the reputation, with many, of honesty of purpose.

“Den you are ver wrong—because some bores are ver useful,” rejoined the lady from the Rhine: “now dere is my friend dere, wid de hair on his face, dat sits almost asleep by Mamselle Somerton—he is vat you call one grand bore; but den he is so good-natured and useful to drive one about in his four-horse shay—and den, though he has not de money himself, he knows pepel wid money, and dey come vid him to my house, and dey play and mak presents; and so you see, my dear, dey are ver useful.”

“That is very true,” said Mrs. Maxwell, thoughtfully, as if pondering upon those scraps of wisdom which fell from the lips of the foreign sage, and contemplating their practical illustration. “But Lord Vauxhall—I never could make out what he was good for; what possible use can you make of him?”

“O, ver great use,” quickly returned the

other: "he sometime bring de yong men of fashion to my house—and perhaps, some time my dear girl Henriette dere, she make a great *parti*;—her poor fader, he come of one ver great famille, in Garmany."

"Indeed!—ah!—I dare say," said Mrs. Maxwell, casting a glance towards the young lady, and evidently not thinking so highly of her friend's speculations on that subject as the former. "She is a very nice girl."

"Indeed she is sharming girl!" exclaimed the mother; "and I have brought her up so ver well—de men are all in lov wid her; but I bring her up so well, dat she tink nothen of any body but herself."

"A very excellent plan," said Mrs. Maxwell, with whose feelings this system of education exactly coincided; "women cannot be too cautious—men are such brutes."

"Ah! mine Got! dat is ver true," said the German lady, with considerable emphasis; "dey hav no feeling—no sentiment;—dey tink, be-

cause dey shpend der money, dey are ver generous. I could tell dem different, de *grand cochons*. Dey tink dey do us great honor:—now look, Madame Maxwell, and see how dey treat us.”

“ O, they are a precious set!—the best of them are hateful!” said the lady addressed, casting a glance around; and certainly the position of the gentlemen somewhat confirmed the German lady’s remark. Lord Crowther and his party were still seated round the open window; his lordship’s legs were supported by a chair, and he was earnestly and industriously picking his teeth; whilst trifling bets were exchanged between others, touching the arrival of different craft on the river at certain points. Lord Vanelly, Lord Walgrave, and Summers, were still seated at the dinner-table, conversing in a low tone, and the two young ladies continued to be entertained, in the same fashion as before, by the Hon. Colonel Leonard Hopetown.

“ Now do you tink dey would treat dere own

pepel so, Madame Maxwell?" continued Mrs. Stuls. "No, dey would not dare. Dis is de English gentleman!—dey pay and dey tink dey do what dey like. Ah, my dear Madame Maxwell, you never see dis abroad; dis is not de country for women. If I did not get de money—mush money—I would not stay one hour in dis country—I do hate de *triste* ill-mannered *cochons* of de men!"

"I think your opinion is quite right," said Mrs. Maxwell, who looked a sincere approval of her new friend's sentiments. "A woman's sole object should be her own interest."

Just as this amiable axiom was confirmed by both ladies, the notes of a key-bugle were heard in the interior of the establishment, playing, rather more vociferously than melodiously, "The Lass of Richmond Hill," accompanied by considerable scampering and scuffling in the passages. The key-bugle, with its accompaniment, were evidently walking up stairs, when, just as it was judged time to ring the bell to

enquire the reason of such disturbance, the door suddenly swung open, and in rushed two large pointer dogs, and a baby, three feet high, of the Newfoundland breed, followed by the Hon. Mr. Thomas Scampington, blowing away at the bugle with all his might—his cheeks red, and inflated to their utmost extent—bearing no unapt resemblance to the efforts of some tyro artist who, with vivid colours, essays his mythological skill at the delineation of Boreas. The dogs instantly made a rapid detour of the room; in the course of which they upset a table placed for the ladies, covered with wine and fruit; and the waiter, who had ushered in the respectable party, in his endeavour to save the table, was thrown on his back upon the floor, and received the contents of a glass basin of lemon-cream, covering his face, breast and stomach, like a huge mustard plaister. Upon this the three dogs instantly rushed upon him, as if they would have made a meal of him and the

cream together; but the poor fellow's cries for his life, and the ladies' cries for their dresses, induced the Hon. Tom reluctantly to lay aside his bugle in the middle of a most interesting passage, and apply himself energetically to a horsewhip, which hung from his wrist. The cracking of the thong, with its smart application to the hides of the dogs, which the poor waiter likewise shared, with a due accompaniment of whistling and swearing, at length accomplished the expulsion of the animals from the room; the waiter was picked up, and order was restored.

Every body, excepting the Hon. Tom himself, appeared more or less disconcerted by this unceremonious introduction; but the sportsman, with a happy indifference to consequences, threw himself into a chair—his legs into another—laughed immoderately at the dogs setting on the waiter—declared it was the best thing he ever saw, and that it was a thousand pities to take

off the dogs—and offered an even wager with any body, that they would have eaten him up in ten minutes.

“What did you bring those infernal dogs for, Scampington?” said Walgrave, with some show of pique. “What a d—d mess they have made!”

“My dear fellow, I could not help it,” said Scampington, who, looking round for the first time, observed nothing but grave faces. “I am sure I beg your pardon—but they burst out of the stable, and the devil could not stop them when once a-head. I’m sorry they didn’t devour the waiter, though,”—and he tossed off a tumbler of wine, as if to console himself for the disappointment. “Well, I’ve settled the matter about the steeple-chase. Standish is to ride my mare, Black Bess—I’m too heavy for her, but she will carry him over any thing. I’ve hacked her pretty smartly. Where will you put your money, Walgrave?”

“ We will talk of that another time,” answered Lord Walgrave.

“ Summers, haven’t you got any thing to say to it ?” asked the noble sportsman.

“ I must know a little more about it,” said Summers.

“ What—nothing to be done?—well then, I’ll retire from business. What, Vauxhall not off yet to the mounseers, eh ?”

“ The ‘ mounseers !’—what do you mean ?” lisped Lord Vauxhall.

“ The ‘ dons,’ if you like. Sink me, if I know what you call them,” observed the hon. gentleman. “ You’ll find bivouacking in the mountains a different thing from Walgrave’s quarters in the Tower, over yonder.”

“ Upon my soul, that’s very true,” said Lord Vauxhall, coming to the table ; “ that was a cruel piece of business though, Walgrave, coming down to see you on guard yonder—forcing my passage through the city at great personal

risk. If ever I performed a similar duty, I would certainly insure my life at one of the offices. The risk was quite awful—upon my soul it was.”

“But, mi lord, why you did not go by de water?” suggested Mrs. Stuls; for the ladies had risen, and were evidently thinking of their departure.

“Egad! what a fortunate idea,” exclaimed his lordship; “it’s very singular, but I never thought of that—upon my soul I didn’t; it would have saved me great personal inconvenience. I never could endure the guards, for that reason. I was offered a commission, but I declined it, the duties being too arduous. What was that man’s name, Walgrave, in your company, who was sick with the smell of the men’s dinners.”

“Indeed, I forget now,” said Lord Walgrave, indifferently, and saying something in a low voice to Vanely.

“Now, it’s very curious I should not re-

member that man's name," continued Lord Vauxhall; "he was a great crony of mine, and a very nice fellow; dear me!" and placing his forefinger to his forehead, in the attitude of one who reflects, "what a fool I am!"

"So I tink," said the German lady, in a low voice, but with a highly comic effect, and loud enough to be heard by those around her. Colonel Leonard Hopetown burst into a loud guffau of laughter; the young ladies tittered; and Walgrave and Vanely, who just caught the words, laughed outright.

"Now, Vanely, you have been saying something severe—I know you have," said the exquisite. "You are too bad, upon my soul you are."

Mrs. Maxwell here whispered to Lord Walgrave that the ladies were beginning to tire of the entertainment, and wished to return home. The bill was accordingly ordered, and, whilst the financial affairs were pending, tea and coffee were served, and partaken of. The ladies

then retired. Bonnets, shawls, and cloaks were in instant requisition, and preparations being completed, their mode of departure was arranged.

The evening—but the ride home we must reserve for another chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

“Care to our coffin adds a nail, no doubt;
While ev’ry laugh, so merry, draws one out.”

“’Tis ever common,
That men are merriest when they are from home.”

THE evening had closed in rather darker than usual, when Colonel Hopetown’s carriage and the four greys drew up close to the spot, at Greenwich, where the coaches usually ply for passengers. It was not the old green barouche (which was repairing), but a regular “turn out,” lent by the coachmaker, which had once, in the days when the noble ambition of imitating stage-coaches and drivers was rife

amongst the aristocracy of our country, been the envy of the four-in-hand club. The days of its new paint and glory had passed, but it was still distinguished by a certain business-like character, which had been its great attraction in past times. Colonel Hopetown drew up at the curb-stone in a very coachman-like style, and the Honourable Tom Scampington descended with the swinging-like professional dexterity of a guard, and long before either of the servants behind had put a foot to the ground, was adjusting the bearing-rein of the near leader. Mrs. Maxwell and Mrs. Stuls were seated on the top—the young ladies having been entrusted to the care of Lord Vauxhall, who had promised to see them both safe at Mrs. Stuls's house in Regent-street, which was the rendezvous. The inside was occupied by Mr. Scampington's three dogs, of which mention has been made.

“The tongue of the buckle has given way,” cried the Honourable Tom. “You Edward,

look into the right-hand pocket of my great coat on the box—you will find some pieces of cord ; I can make it fast for to-night, and you can get a new buckle in the morning.”

Edward, the servant addressed, searched the honourable gentleman's pockets, and, amongst the miscellaneous assortment of nails, pickers, sponge, brush, and useful articles of all kinds for exigencies on the road, found some small balls of cord of different sizes, one of which the Honourable Tom speedily availed himself of. Whilst this was proceeding, the colonel descended from the box, one of the servants standing at the horses' heads, and, with critical acumen, retouched the lamps, which were not *quite* the thing, until he surveyed the whole with a well-pleased eye. The Honourable Tom soon made fast the leader's bearing-rein, and was for a moment surveying the “set out,” with the colonel, previous to starting, when an elderly gentleman advanced towards them, evidently looking at the coach with some interest.

He was a most respectable-looking old gentleman, having something of a clerical appearance, and wearing a powdered wig, of ancient dimensions, and hat of capacious brim; he looked very much like the fellow of a college who passed ten months out of the year in the cloisters. From the two little pink spots on his cheeks, it would seem that he had been tasting of the good things of Greenwich, though certainly not imprudently so.

The Honourable Mr. Scampington instantly detected a subject worthy of his peculiar pleasantries, and, touching his companion's ribs with his elbow, by way of hinting his purpose, he whispered—

“I know the old boy; he was my tutor at Oxford, twelve years ago;” and then thrusting his hands in his coat-pockets, tucking his chin well into his cravat, and looking the old gentleman hard in the face—“Going up the road, sir?” he said, with all the tone of a practised cad. “Elephant and Castle! Charing-cross!

shan't charge you more than a shilling, sir ; room up in front, sir ; off directly !”

“This is a very nice coach.” said the old gentleman, in a mild, pleasant tone of voice. “Where is the coachman?”

“Here am I, sir,” said the gallant driver, touching his hat ; “off di-rectly !”

“Bless me !” ejaculated the old gentleman, in a *sotto voce*, his eye catching the honourable colonel's uncoachman-like physiognomy, “what will these puppies try next ?”

“Now, sir, if *you* please !” said Mr. Scampington.

“Have you room inside ?” asked the old gentleman.

“No, sir,” returned the Honourable Tom ; “inside all full ; some foreign gentlemen from Dovor. You see, sir, we're not a Greenwich short horse-killer, but a Dovor coach, only come a little out of our way this time, by order of the proper-rieters. Now, sir, when you're ready.”

“ Ah, I see,” observed the old gentleman ;
“ foreign gentlemen, eh ?”

“ Yes, sir, I wish we was rid on ’em,” said Scampington ; “ can’t understand a word of their lingo.” At this moment the Newfoundland partially exhibited his good-natured countenance through the window.

“ Bless me !” again ejaculated the old gentleman ; “ what a very extraordinary countenance—quite remarkable !”

“ Now, sir, if *you* please !” said the driver ; “ can’t stay no longer. Bill, ’sist the old gen’leman to mount, can’t you ?” Mr. Scampington immediately helped the old gentleman to the roof.

“ P’raps them ladies will make room for you atwixt ’em,” said Scampington, and the ladies immediately complying, the old gentleman, with many bows and courteous apologies for disturbing them, took his seat.

“ A very nice coach, indeed ; and cushions, too, I declare,” remarked the pleased old gen-

tleman to Mrs. Stuls; "we never saw such things in my younger days."

"A ver grand improvement, sare, dese coches, and de cochyman, too, I tink," replied Mrs. Stuls.

The old gentleman looked as if he could not exactly agree to that latter observation; but the driver was seated, the Honourable Tom took his place beside him, and off they went, amidst the usual accompaniments of children screaming and dogs barking, which latter debate was answered most vociferously by the canine trio of inside passengers.

"Bless me!" again exclaimed the old gentleman; "what a barking! it almost seems inside the coach."

"Ver mush indeed," replied the lady. "De inside gentlemen talk dere language, perhaps."

But the Honourable Mr. Scampington began to favour the roadside amateurs with the "Lass of Richmond Hill," which precluded further remark, till the carriage had passed Deptford,

and arrived nearly at New-cross, when the leader, whose bearing-rein Mr. Scampington had arranged at Greenwich, having for some time been uneasy, now began to show symptoms of insubordination. The honourable guard jumped down with his usual alacrity, but the horse plunged so violently, that he could not get at him. The ladies became alarmed, and the old gentleman began to contemplate a descent.

“You are better where you are,” said the colonel; “no danger, sir—sit still. Bill has bore him up too tight, that’s all; a little bit tender in the mouth; he will make it all right in a minute.” In the meantime, a large crowd began to collect, and, as usual, abundance of advice was offered.

“What do you hold him in that way for?” cried one four-horse amateur, in shirt-sleeves, and apron tucked round his waist; “the orse ’ll go well enough. Give him his ead, can’t you?”

“And who the devil wants to take away his head, Solomon?” retorted the Honourable Tom; “he’ll keep it longer than you will your block, I’ll warrant.”

“Come, Jack, you’ve got your answer,” said a companion of the first speaker; “it isn’t no stage-coachman, it’s a gen’leman of property.”

“Oh, yes,” returned the disconcerted mechanic, “you said property! put a penny to his property, and mayhap he may raise a half pint of beer on it.”

Whilst this interchange of wit was proceeding, amongst sundry other mirth-exciting observations and laughter of the “free-born Britons,” the Honourable Mr. Scampington, with the assistance of the servants, had succeeded in calming the irritability of the leader, and jumping up, they made another start, to the tune of the “Lass of Richmond-hill.”

After the first little alarm was over, the old gentleman began to be much amused, and being

in high spirits, was talking with great glee to the ladies.

“I say, old un,” said the amateur guard, spirting through his teeth into the road with great dexterity, and rolling his tongue in his mouth, as if he chewed tobacco, “I say, old un, you mustn’t be too sweet upon that ’ere female on the off-side of you, cos, d’ye see, she’s my wife, and t’other un’s t’other gen’leman’s wife.”

“Oh, no offence to you, I hope,” said the old gentleman, apologetically; “I’m sure the ladies will bear me out when I say—”

“Oh, sare,” interposed Mrs. Stuls, “you are quite the genteelman.”

“Oh, I don’t suspect nothink—not I,” returned the *soi-disant* functionary; “only I knows as gen’lemen often takes adwantage of a poor man to injure his domesticated peace; though, for the matter of that, if right was right, poor or rich, I’m as good a man as any body.”

“ My good friend,” mildly remarked the old gentleman, “ I regret that persons should be found, who take advantage of their rank in society to distress their fellow-creatures ; but, with regard to your latter observation, I should strongly advise you not to repine at your situation ; for, although, philosophically speaking, all men are alike, yet education will always have its advantage in our social position.”

“ There you’re right, old gentleman,” said the Honourable Tom, with apparent earnestness ; “ I always finds it so. Edication, indeed—yes ; I should like to hear the man as can talk logic afore me. But, to be sure, it isn’t every feller that’s had my adwantages.”

“ And pray, my friend, what advantage have *you* had ?”

“ Adwantage ? why, I’ve had three years’ edication at Trinity-college, Oxford.”

“ You !”

“ Yes, I ; where’s the wonder of that ? D’ye want me to give you a touch o’ the classics ?

here goes then—‘*Propria quæ maribus* had a little dog ; *Quæ genus* was his name ; *As in presenti—*’”

“There, there, my friend, that’s enough,” interposed the old gentleman. “I was not aware Trinity-college had the honour of rearing such a genius.”

“I can give you plenty more if you are not convinced. I can go right through with ‘*amo, amas*, I loved a lass,’” continued the facetious Scampington. “But, my eyes, what fun I have had at that ere blessed college. I used to know a feller there named Scampington, and we was as like as two peas, and run all manner of rigs together. Mayhap you may know him, sir.”

“Well, I did know a gentleman of that name, certainly,” said the old gentleman, looking hard at the pretended guard ; “and, now I recollect, you do bear some little resemblance to him.”

“Do *you* know Scampington, old gen’le-

man?" said the other, with animation; "then you knows a trump, my hearty; but that's nothink;—I was a going to tell you what a rig I played him once. We had no milk one night, wery late, and we was a drinking hard at milk punch. 'Well,' says I to the coves, 'if you lower me from the winder into the doctor's field'—old Doctor Greaves it was, we used to call him old Squaretoes, for shortness—'well,' says I, 'lower me down, my boys, and I'll soon bring you up milk.' Well, they lowers me down, and I goes into the cow-house, and milks old Squaretoes' cow; and I had such a precious job with her, that I was obligated to tie up her knee to the stall; but, howsomdever, I brings back the milk safe enough. But now comes the fun on it. In the morning Scampington receives a message from Squaretoes, to come to him on p'tickler business. 'Well, Mr. Scampington,' says Squaretoes, 'so you and your friends were short of milk last night.' 'Not p'tickler, sir,' says Mr. Scampington.

‘Then how came you to milk my cow?’ says Squaretoes. ‘I milk your cow, sir!’ says Scampington, struck all of a heap like. ‘Yes, sir,’ says Squaretoes; ‘don’t deny it, cos I should be sorry to hear a gen’leman, what is sich, to tell a lie. Here’s your ankecher, with your name upon it, what you tied the poor hanimal up with; and, when you milks her agen, sir, have a little more humanity than to leave her tied up all night.’ Well, he didn’t say a word in denial, in course, cos the thing was too plain agen him; but, my eyes, how he gived it me arterwards; for the fact was, as I took his ankecher, and, in my hurry to get away, forgot to loose the hanimal, and so the man found it in the morning, and took it to old Squaretoes, and that rig remains agen Scampington to this day.”

“My friend, you have certainly managed to pick up some college anecdotes,” said the old doctor, for he was no other than a master of Trinity-college, and formerly tutor to the hope-

ful gentleman who was actually the hero of the anecdote he related.

“Pick up! you said,” he continued; “mayhap you want me to give you some more specimens of my classical learning. Why, lord bless *you*, the classics comes as natteral to me as mother’s milk; I was born and christened in the middle on ’em—they stood godfathers for me. What! don’t you think it?” he added, seeing the old gentleman smile.

“Why — excuse me if I am wrong — I should rather think that you were born and christened in a stable, and that your godfathers were ostlers,” returned the old gentleman, chuckling.

“I say, Bill, blow the horn,” said the driver, who could hardly sit steadily on the box for laughing; and the ladies were highly amused.

“Why, old gen’leman, you’re rigging on me, I’m thinking; do you mean to say its impossible for a gen’leman to come for to drive

a stage-coach?" asked the Honourable Mr. Scampington.

"Certainly not impossible," returned the old gentleman, "for I know there is an unfortunate individual at this very time, who drives a coach on the Dovor road. The unhappy individual was really educated at Oxford, and entered into the church."

"Ah, it's too true!" said Mr. Scampington, with a deep sigh.

"What, do you know the unfortunate gentleman, then?" asked the old gentleman, with interest.

"Know him? yes, I b'lieve you," replied the other, "I should think I did know him. Why, sir," he continued, turning himself half round on the box, "you see before you, at this blessed minute, that ere unhappy individual himself! I am that ere unfortunate gen'leman what was brought up to the church!"

"You that unfortunate gentleman! You brought up to the church!" repeated the old

gentleman, hardly knowing whether he heard aright, the impudence of the assertion appearing to him so astounding.

“In course I was,” reiterated the other, ‘else how could I be that ere poor devil of a parson you spoke about? And this ere other gen’leman on the box is the son of a lord what took to the box solely by way of diwarshion, and to wear out his old clothes, and he never takes nothink but half-crowns, just to keep up his dignity.”

Here the old gentleman lifted up his hands and eyes, uttering something like a pious ejaculation touching the enormity of lying. “My friend,” he said, gravely, “we are near our journey’s end, and I would read you a lesson before we part.”

“Let’s have it,” said the other; “and draw it short, if you please.”

“When you wish to amuse yourself with the credulity of your passengers,” resumed the old gentleman, “you had better choose other sub-

jects than myself. The poor gentleman whom you wish to personate, may have sunk very low, but could never disguise from an observing person, the man of education—the gentleman; whilst you, assume what character you will, can never disguise what nature meant you for—the impudent, lying knave !”

“Hollo! Bill, blow the horn!” cried the gallant driver, almost exploding with mirth; and the ladies were covering their faces with their handkerchiefs, to endeavour to conceal their merriment.

“D—n my eyes!” cried the seeming guard, with well pretended bluster, “I’ll tell you what it is old un—if you give me any more of that, I’m d—d if I don’t blow the dust out of your wig, my old boy—that’s all.”

“My friend,” retorted the old gentleman, “if you cannot tell the truth yourself, at least keep your temper when the truth is told to you; however, here we are, and, if you please, I’ll get down.”

“Certainly, sir, certainly,” said the pretended guard; “you’ll see that I follows the true maxim of the clargy, I never bears no malice.” And, as the greys drew up to the pavement at Charing-cross, down jumped the Honourable Mr. Scampington from the box, and assisted the old gentleman to dismount. “Now, sir, don’t be flustered; put your foot on the iron just agen the lamp—a leetle bit further—that’s it, sir; now t’other on the wheel; there you are, sir, as right as a trivet!”

“Thank’ye, my friend,” said the old gentleman searching his pocket for a shilling; but, before he could accomplish this object, an officious cad attendant upon the stage-coaches in that quarter, mistaking the equipage for one of the “real sort,” rushed towards the coach-door, and opened it, under the expectation of a job from a passenger, when out scrambled the imprisoned inside passengers. One knocked down his officious liberator, and the “baby,” spring-

ing directly on the pavement, regardless of impediments, encountered the old gentleman, whom he reversed in a trice, and, with the good-nature peculiar to the animal, by way of the *amende honourable*, immediately sprang back, and began to lick the prostrate old gentleman's face. One of the servants, however, quickly removed him, whilst the honourable guard, roaring with laughter, restored his passenger to his equilibrium, with no other harm than that of astonishment and fright.

“There, there is your shilling,” said the old gentleman, sulkily, holding out the coin to him, and rubbing the marks of the dust from his person with the other hand, “and I would advise you, my friend, to be a little more respectful to your passengers, if you wish to thrive.”

“Thank’ye, old un !” returned the amateur ; “as to your advice, why, I’ll take it duly into consideration ; but, with regard to the matter

of the shilling, why, I'll make you a present on it, for the liberty that the gen'l'eman in the fur great coat took with you."

"Graceless reprobate!" muttered the old gentleman, who saw that he was now made an object of low merriment. "Here, coachman, take your fare!" he cried to the driver.

"I never takes nothin but half-crowns," said the gentleman on the box.

"Mayhap you may want it to buy powder for your wig," added the guard.

"Or, p'r'aps the genl'eman may vant a plate o' allymode afore he goes home," cried the cad who had opened the coach-door, who at once saw what customers he had to deal with.

"Take it amongst you," said the angry old gentleman, throwing the shilling on the pavement, which was instantly secured by the cad, "it will buy bread for you in Newgate!" and off he went to the tune of the "Lass of Richmond-hill," with which the Honourable Tom immediately favoured his exit, and (by

way of chorus) the shouts of the rabble which had, by this time, gathered around.

The honourable Mr. Scampington, having now met two noble friends, the trio proceeded to amuse themselves with twisting off knockers and other aristocratic diversions ; promising to rejoin the party at Mrs. Stuls's, in Regent-street, in the course of the evening. The colonel immediately drove thither, and found the young ladies and Lord Vauxhall already arrived.

CHAPTER IV.

“ But be not long, for in the tedious minutes,
Exquisite intervals, I’m on the rack ;
For sure the greatest evil man can know,
Bears no proportion to the dread suspense.”

It was about a fortnight after the death of his mother, that Mr. Vernon was seated in his private room, in company with Mr. Robinson. The banker had once only visited London since that event occurred, and the occasion of that visit, as the reader will suspect, was to raise money to discharge the debt of honour he had incurred to Lord Walgrave—debts of honour being the only pecuniary obligations which a gentleman, now-a-days, feels himself under the necessity of satisfying promptly.

Vernon was seated at a side-table, closely investigating various complicated accounts which, it seemed, had been not very regularly entered in a red book that lay before him ; and, as he from time to time transferred to paper several rough balances, ascertained by a hasty glance over the sums on either side the account, the quick beating of his foot upon the floor betrayed that his occupation was far from being an agreeable one. Mr. Robinson, on his part, was ostensibly perusing a newspaper, with all the interest of a deep politician ; but really, by an upward effort of vision over the edge of the journal, was scrutinizing, with no little curiosity, the labours of his companion. Mr. Robinson, at length, perceiving that the banker had arrived at an arithmetical *non plus*, thought it an opportune period to re-commence conversation.

“ Will Mr. Vernon,” said he, “ in his usual tone of bland humility, “ condescend to inform me how I can be of the least service to him ?

Time is precious, you know, sir, and even mine has claims upon it which it sometimes finds a difficulty in fulfilling."

"I beg your pardon, really," said Vernon, suddenly closing the book, and turning towards the solicitor. "Why, the fact is, Robinson, the large sum I lost the other night to that lord, at Mrs. Maxwell's, has, I confess, slightly crippled me for a month or two. It was a large sum to be compelled to draw out of the house in these times, Robinson."

"It was so," replied the solicitor, in a voice of deep sympathy, which jarred upon the banker's feelings; "it was so, indeed; a very large sum; but, let me hope, at least, that it will not cause any serious unpleasantness or difficulty in that quarter."

"Not at all—not at all," said Vernon, hastily; "but let me tell you, my friend, were you as well acquainted with mercantile affairs as myself, you would know that it is not sufficient that a banking-house should be out of diffi-

culty, but it should be beyond the reach of danger—of suspicion ;—I mean, that it should be in a situation to grant, and not receive accommodation.”

“ Truly,” said Robinson ; “ the interests of so many are involved in its stability.”

“ Just so ; and therefore it is that I require, at this moment, for three months only, the advance of a considerable sum of money. It would not do,” he continued quickly, seeing that Robinson was about to speak, “ it would not do to go into the money-market for this purpose ; it might excite unfounded suspicions, which, however unfounded, might do our house considerable injury.”

“ I perceive, sir,” said the solicitor, “ what you mean. You would prefer an advance from some private individual, unconnected with business.”

“ Just so—that’s it,” said Vernon. “ Now, Robinson, do you know such a party ? Upon

good security, mind you. Upon good security. What do you say?"

"Why, the fact is," said Robinson, after a long pause, during which he attempted to look like a man who is running over in his mind the names of various capitalists, at the same time that he had his eye immoveably fixed upon one; "why, you know, Mr. Vernon, that I have the honour to be professionally engaged for many—very many—highly respectable clients; but, at the present moment, money is so scarce a commodity—"

"It is so," said Vernon; "but still there is now, as there always is, vast capital unemployed; and, if you know any gentleman who could lend me, for three months, 30,000*l.*—"

"Bless my soul!" cried Robinson; "but that is, indeed, a vast sum, Mr. Vernon. I'm afraid—what security did you mention, sir?"

"My own bills at three months," said the banker.

Mr. Robinson buried himself in profound silence for a considerable period.

“ You doubt, perhaps,” resumed the banker, with a contemptuous smile, “ you doubt the goodness of the security ?”

“ My dear, kind, good sir, how could you think so ?” exclaimed Robinson, with an appealing earnestness peculiar to him. “ Doubt the goodness of the security ! oh, no ; oh, no ; but”—and the solicitor deviated into a confidential whisper—“ don’t you think that your name alone upon the bills might—eh ? would not the party think it strange, out of the way, uncommon ?”

“ That’s true, too ;—you’re right,” said Vernon, musing ; “ it would appear strange.”

“ Now, if the bills were accepted by the firm,” suggested Robinson, gazing at the banker with friendly perseverance, “ wouldn’t that be much better ? ‘ Warkworth, Vernon, and Co.,’ who could resist such security as that ?”

Vernon made no answer, but turned himself

slowly round to the side-table, and again referred to the red book, which he examined closely for some minutes.

“Accepted by the firm ! well, be it so,” he said, at length. “But have you got a channel for them, Robinson ? Can you get them done ?”

“And then,” said Robinson, not applying himself immediately to the question, “if you did not wish them presented at the banking-house, you could bring the money to me the day before they fell due, and I could take them up, and nobody the wiser. Such things are done frequently, I know.”

“That might be of no importance,” answered Vernon, carelessly. “It shall be made worth your while, Robinson, if you can manage this matter for me.”

“Oh, my dear friend, do not hurt my feelings,” cried Robinson, with animation. “Have I not already partaken of your generosity ? Do I not know the nobleness of your nature ?”

and here, the solicitor, who was possessed of, or rather with, that nervous weakness which passes exceedingly well for fine feelings, became sensibly affected.

“Well, I know your heart, my good friend,” said the banker. “But when can you set about this matter?”

“At once,” cried Robinson, promptly, whose composure was always as easily recovered as lost. “I will draw three bills upon you. I have been making a purchase of property for you in the west of England, that will do—won’t it? A most profitable investment; and the vendor, who does not wish to appear in the matter, has employed me to get your bills discounted for him; or, I have advanced the money to him—that would be better, perhaps.”

“Excellent, Robinson,” said Vernon; “why, you’re quite a financier.”

“Nay, a mere lawyer—nothing more,” said the solicitor, flattered by the compliment. “Shall I step out and procure the bills?”

“Would you be so kind?” said the banker. “It might be as well that my people here knew nothing of it; servants will think, Robinson, and talk, too.”

“And talk too much, very frequently; dangerous people, servants, at all times,” remarked Robinson, a reminiscence of Jack Jeffries, and his villany, intruding into his mind at that moment. It was with a gentle sigh that he took his hat and cane, and proceeded into the town on his mission.

For a long time after Robinson had left the room, Vernon sat immersed in thought. The chance that now presented itself of replacing the money he had withdrawn from the house, and which, only because he had so done without consulting his partner, he had begun to fear might be required, together with the hope that he should be enabled to repay his sisters a portion of the property with which they had entrusted him—these considerations afforded him ample room for not unpleasant reflection

during the solicitor's absence, who, however, returned at least as soon as he could have been expected, and who, producing the bills, proceeded to business, with his usual exemplary promptitude.

“My dear Robinson,” said Vernon, as the former laid aside one of the completed bills, and seized upon another with professional dexterity, “have you at this moment any gentleman in your mind, to whom to offer these bills?”

“I have, sir,” said Robinson, looking up through his spectacles knowingly; “and a gentleman in this neighbourhood, too.”

“Indeed!” cried Vernon, surprised; “and pray who may he be? I hope, no person to whom I can object?”

“Unexceptionable, quite,” replied Robinson; “Mr. Hopwood, I think, is the very man. A gentleman well disposed towards me, I assure you; and wealthy—very. But you know that, of course.”

“The very man,” cried the banker, “and not likely to suspect, I imagine, that this is not a *bonâ fide* business transaction.”

“The last man in the world,” cried Robinson ; “and he’ll do them, I know he will, and at the regular discount. Here, sir, are the bills, all ready, and only waiting your acceptance.”

Vernon, having duly accepted the bills, and satisfied Mr. Robinson touching the consideration he was to receive for bringing this transaction to a successful issue, the solicitor assisted himself to a sandwich and two glasses of wine, and having arranged with the banker that the latter was to call upon him on the following day, most obsequiously took his leave.

It is impossible to describe the degree of relief caused to Vernon by the prospect of the accommodation which Robinson had undertaken to effect, and which he had given him the best hopes of bringing to a successful issue. Again, the thought recurred to him of liqui-

dating a part of the claim which his sisters, indeed, never urged, but which, perhaps, the more, from that circumstance, he felt himself obliged to satisfy. His determination was strengthened, when he called to mind the promise he had made to his mother on her death-bed ; and the helpless condition of the girls, if anything should eventually happen to himself (but this he dare not anticipate), appealed to his heart with a force which he could not resist. For, in truth, Vernon was tenderly and equally attached to his sisters, although his love for each was of a very different character. The elder, who was but a few years his junior, was a woman of uncommon energy of mind, and, at the same time (for they are not always united), of great singleness of heart. Her passions were perfectly under the control of her reason, and both were subservient to a strong religious feeling, which pervaded, but did not obtrusively show or display itself in her actions. The younger was a gentle, timid, and confiding

creature, whom he had nursed upon his knee ; who had been, as it were, his darling. The love he bore towards the elder, therefore, was imbued with almost deferential respect ; his affection for the younger was not unmixed with fondness. No ; he could not see these beings—he felt that—he could not see them at the mercy or at the caprice of fortune.

A gentle tap at the door interrupted the reverie into which he had fallen.

“ Come in ! ”

It was Captain Laurence.

But, before we describe the short interview which took place between these two gentlemen, it may be as well to indicate the feeling (if, indeed, it might be termed more than an impression) which Vernon, for a short time past, had conceived against the captain.

Laurence was a man whose chief characteristics were candour and openness. A principle of honesty and plain dealing appeared in all his actions—a principle which is much more ef-

fectual, when opposed to duplicity or imposition, than all the diplomatic *finesse* ever practised by the most tortuous ambassador at a treaty. In addition to his pay, he was possessed of a small independent property ; and he contrived so to regulate his affairs, that, in all probability, he never had a claim upon him which he was not prepared to satisfy on the instant.

It may be impossible to account for the dislike which Vernon had, undoubtedly, during the last fortnight, entertained towards Laurence. Perhaps, a knowledge of the easy circumstances of the latter, opposed to his own involved affairs, furnished a contrast which was far from being a pleasing one ; and Vernon could not but feel a certain degree of envy, when he witnessed the perfect serenity and apparent happiness of the other, and compared it with the misery which pervaded his own bosom. Besides, Vernon knew full well the subject upon which Laurence was anxious to speak, and he

almost dreaded a topic which included a reference to a matter of which he was aware he had delayed the settlement too long. Indeed, the captain could not have selected a more untoward period than the present for renewing his claim to the hand of Vernon's sister ; for the banker was one of those men who, having quieted their conscience by making good resolutions, are somewhat impatient of what they consider an ill-timed, if not impertinent, application on the part of others, to put those good resolutions into effect. The constrained and cold manner, therefore, in which he returned the cordial shake of his hand, by the captain, might of itself almost have betrayed to Laurence, if he had not been one of the most unsuspecting of men, that a change had taken place in the banker's sentiments towards him.

“ I am sorry if I disturb you, Vernon,” said the captain, seating himself ; “ but, you know that I am anxious that the affair of which we have recently spoken so often, should be

brought to a conclusion, so far, at least, as preliminaries are concerned."

"My dear fellow," replied Vernon, petulantly, "you not only appear anxious, but in a hurry, to conclude this affair, as you call it. Now, I really cannot see any particular reason for haste; I must say, I can hardly understand your motive, Captain Laurence."

"Why, the fact is," said the other, "I have been told, this morning, that it is by no means unlikely that my regiment may be ordered to India in a month or two, and I have reason to believe that, in that case, Charlotte would not object to accompany me; and"—he hesitated for a moment—"and you know, Vernon, it was the wish of your mother that the marriage should take place as early as propriety and circumstances might permit."

Vernon was silent for some minutes, and an expression, almost of pain, passed across his brow. "I am quite aware, sir," said he, "that such was my mother's wish, and it shall be ful-

filled. I should be sorry," he added, with a sneer, "to thwart the happiness of two such devoted lovers. But, at present, I am so engaged, so absorbed, in matters of at least equal importance to myself, that you must excuse me if I decline deciding upon this sentimental point at the present moment."

"I will not trouble you, then," said Laurence, with an air of chagrin, and he arose; "when you are more at leisure, (and let me hope it may be soon), I will wait upon you; in the meanwhile, perhaps I may have the pleasure of paying my respects to the ladies?"

"Oh, certainly," answered Vernon, as he rang the bell. "Doubtless, the ladies will be happy of your company. You will find them in their own room. Pray excuse my attending you." And, with a formal bow on either side, the friends separated.

There is a certain state of mind, during the influence of which, we are disposed to ascribe even the kindest and best intentions of our

friends, to some sinister or unworthy motive. Vernon, at the moment of which we are now writing, was in this predicament of feeling. The suspicion occurred to him, or rather he had brought his mind to suspect, that the captain was merely a mercenary adventurer, eager to possess himself of his sister's property ; and the more he hurriedly reviewed what appeared to himself the tactics of the captain, the stronger did the conviction impress itself upon him, that he was not wrong in his conjecture. He resolved, at all events, to confer with his elder sister, touching the expediency of postponing the match, if not of breaking it off altogether—a resolution which, probably, the state of his own affairs rendered him too willing, and indeed almost anxious, to adopt. Whilst, however, he was debating this matter in his own mind, a servant entered the room.

“Mr. Thompson is below, sir,” said the man, “and wishes to see you immediately, on very particular business.”

“Mr. Thompson ! what Thompson ?” cried Vernon, hastily.

“From the counting-house, sir—your head clerk.”

“Oh ! show him up directly.”

Before Vernon could even surmise the cause of Thompson’s unexpected mission to him, that middle-aged and sedate gentleman, who had followed the servant up stairs, entered the room, and, with that air of habitual deference which a long servitude in a counting-house compels a man to contract, paid his respects to his master.

“Well, Thompson, and what brings you here ?” said Vernon, with as much seeming indifference as a rather uneasy sense of something wrong enabled him on the instant to assume.

“Mr. Warkworth, sir, desired me to come down, and request your immediate attendance at the office,” said the confidential clerk.

“Anything wrong, Thompson ?” faltered

Vernon, and he turned pale. "Any one gone? Here, man, take a glass of wine, it will do you good. You look fatigued. Sit down."

The clerk obeyed; and, as he took a chair, and helped himself to a glass, he could not help thinking that "the governor," as he, in the security of domestic life, designated him, stood, of the two, rather more in need of wine than himself. Vernon appeared to be of the same opinion, for he seized the decanter, and helped himself successively to two bumpers, which he drank with an air of hurried uneasiness.

"Well," said Vernon, setting down his glass, "what's the matter? What has happened?"

"Mr. Warkworth did not communicate any particulars to me, sir," replied Thompson; "but, I fear—I suspect—all is not right. He has been greatly agitated all the morning."

"Indeed!" said Vernon, and he mused for some minutes, gazing into the unmeaning face of the clerk, as if he could extract thence

some intelligence which Thompson had been forbidden to communicate. He rang the bell violently. A servant appeared.

“Let my horse be got ready instantly, James. Thompson, you can follow me.”

“I am returning now,” said the clerk, rising briskly. “A postchaise is at the door. Will you not take a seat in it, sir?”

“No, no!” cried Vernon, “the horse will be better. I will go alone,” and he hurried to his own room.

It may be affirmed that Vernon had never, in his life, felt himself in such a state of embarrassment and perplexity as he did at this moment. A thousand fears, and doubts that led to fears, possessed him. Did Warkworth suspect—had he discovered anything? What could be the cause of this sudden summons from his partner?

In that condition of mixed feelings, which became the more involved, the greater the endeavour to reduce them to order, Vernon

mounted his horse, determined at once to know the worst, whatever it might be."

As he entered the private counting-house, he beheld Warkworth pacing the room in the greatest perturbation. Turning suddenly, that gentleman recognised him, and hastening towards him, involuntarily extended his hand.

"I am glad you're come, Vernon—I am very glad you are come," said he: "I hardly expected you. Sit down: we must have some talk together." And the old gentleman slipped the bolt of the door.

A pause ensued, of some moments' duration. Vernon felt scarcely disposed to commence a conversation, and, indeed, had he done so, was "mainly ignorant" of any pleasing subject to touch upon; and Warkworth was still pacing the room. At length, however, he took a seat opposite to his partner, and leaning forward with his elbow on one knee, said, in a half whisper—

"Well? you don't speak: what's to be"

done? How are we to manage? What's to be done, Vernon?"

"My dear sir," returned the other—"what's to be done? How can I possibly advise until I know what's the matter?"

"And Thompson didn't tell you?" cried Warkworth.

"Nay; he said you had communicated nothing to him."

"Beast!" said Warkworth, emphatically. "Told him nothing? No: is the whole world to be let into our private affairs? But the man knows it all, well enough," and here he arose, and slipping aside a small curtain, took a private view of the office. He returned almost immediately.

"Vernon," said he, "Markham's house is gone."

"Gone!" cried Vernon.

"Irrevocably! and you know how deep we are in there."

Vernon groaned audibly.

“Aye, that’s bad enough,” continued Warkworth; “but it’s not the worst. There’s a run upon us, sir! A run upon the house of Warkworth, Vernon, and Co.! That I should live to say so, and to say truth! Look here,” and he beckoned to Vernon to follow him. “Look here!” he resumed, in a whisper, directing Vernon’s attention to the crowded office, through the small window, from which the partners, unperceived, could observe all that passed. “Do you see this? Do you perceive Glegg’s clerk at the counter, with that heap of bills? Couldn’t wait for the clearing—couldn’t wait for that! And, there! do you mark old Simpson—come himself, you see! Must witness the thing himself, that he may be the better able to talk about it. Well, this is capital, upon my word! Isn’t it a fine sight, Vernon? Doesn’t it do you good to see it?”

“Good God! Warkworth,” cried Vernon, drawing his half-frantic partner from the window, “what *is* to be done?”

“Aye, that’s an excellent question, truly,” cried Warkworth; “especially if we could find as excellent an answer to it. I’ll tell you what is first to be done;—sit down;—*we* must come to an understanding.”

“What do you mean, Mr. Warkworth?” said Vernon, faintly.

“We can go on at this rate about forty-eight hours—no more,” said Warkworth, as if half-speaking to himself, “and then we must stop—stop payment—Warkworth and Vernon will stop payment!” He arose suddenly, and walked to the door, which he opened. “Thompson!”

The assiduous head clerk was instantly at his side.

“Bring me that book instantly—you know which I mean.”

The clerk vanished, and presently returned, placing the book into the extended hand of his master.

The banker closed the door, which he again

bolted, and, approaching the table, beckoned Vernon to his side.

“Now, Vernon, if you please,” and he turned over the leaves with nervous haste, “be so good as to cast your eyes on this—it is a balance-sheet—do you see this?”

Vernon recoiled, thunderstruck.

“Aye, not a pleasant prospect, certainly,” continued Warkworth. “Now, young man,” and he turned suddenly towards his partner, and grasped him tightly by the wrist, “what have you done with the large sum of money you drew out of the bank a few days ago? We must have it, and, by to-morrow morning, it must be had. Why, you don’t mean to tell me that you can’t get it? It shall be got—I will have it—I will, by the living God I will!”

Warkworth, as he concluded, dropped into his chair, and, covering his face with his hands, burst into a fit of hysterical weeping.

Vernon was silent. It was the first time in his life that Warkworth had ever addressed

him thus ; and, upon another occasion, he might have felt inclined to resent the insolent catechizing of one whom he had always considered, in all respects, immeasurably his inferior. But he had sufficient sense of justice still left in him to feel that he too fully deserved the implied reproach of his partner ; and, as he beheld the old man in tears before him, his heart melted within him, and he had, as yet, no power to utter a word.

Warkworth at length raised his head, and, drying his eyes, looked severely but mournfully at his companion. “ Well, then,” he said, “ you cannot get this money—it is gone ? I was foolish to expect otherwise ; and we must stop. This house, which has been in existence—which has flourished—for seventy years—upon which no cloud of suspicion ever rested before—must come to an end. I am glad, Vernon, that your father is not alive to see this ; but, were he living, it had never occurred.

It would have killed him, sir ; it would have broken his heart, as it will mine."

"Warkworth, hear me for one moment," cried Vernon, deeply affected.

"But all shall be known, sir," interrupted Warkworth, with animation. "My reputation, my character, must not be destroyed by your culpable imprudence. I have not lived in this house during fifty years, respected, a man of honour, Mr. Vernon, to be dishonoured in my old age. All shall be given up to the creditors ; something will, I dare say, remain ; enough for a man of my moderate wishes. Yes—it will be better that it should be so. Indeed, we have gone on too long in the dark, together."

Vernon, as the other concluded, cast a glance of extreme contempt upon the old gentleman, who had so suddenly discovered the virtue of resignation, and who appeared as suddenly prepared to endue himself with it.

"And have I not also a character to lose,

Mr. Warkworth?" he said, with some asperity. "You shall have this money by to-morrow morning, or the chief part of it—I think I may say to a certainty, you shall have it. What! is this the first time we have been pressed? although, perhaps, not to this extent. And is this the first time that I have brought us through, by applying to sources that you little dream of? Come, come, no more talking about it. It shall be done."

"And you say so—and I may rely upon you?" cried Warkworth, starting up, the sudden hope of present extrication from their difficulties causing the water to ascend into his eyes. "You have done many things for us before, which none but yourself could have accomplished. I beg your pardon for having ever thought—" he paused.

"Thought? what have you thought?" demanded Vernon, sharply.

"I mean — suspected," stammered Warkworth.

“ Suspected !” repeated the other.

“ Nothing—nothing,” said his partner. “ Lose not a moment. We will talk of these matters when the storm is blown over. Go at once.”

Vernon arose and took his hat, albeit not greatly pleased to know that his partner had conceived thoughts and suspicions respecting him ; a knowledge which he could hardly have attained from the few words that had fallen from Warkworth. if he himself had not been perfectly aware of his having given occasion for them.

“ I am gone,” said he ; and he was about to retire by a private door.

“ Nay, nay,” said Warkworth, beseechingly, “ go through the office. Your presence in London may turn the tide, which is at this moment against us ; at all events, it will show that we do not fear the issue.”

Vernon hesitated for a moment. “ True, true, you are right,” said he ; “ it will look better, certainly ;” and he opened the door and

walked into the office. All eyes were turned upon him as he entered. The place was nearly filled with persons waiting impatiently to be served at the counter, each of whom, as Vernon appeared, made an instinctive effort to thrust his cheque into the hands of the cashier nearest to him, fearing that the banker was about to announce the insolvency of the house. Even his own clerks made a momentary pause, as he walked, with a calm and unmoved countenance, towards the door; whilst their fingers remained hovering on the gold which was about to be paid over to the clamorous and increasing applicants. Without, however, deigning a look at the multitudinous array about him, he had opened the door, and was issuing into the street, when "old Simpson," whom Warkworth had previously observed, and who, from the crowded state of the banking-house, had only just got his business settled, detained him by the arm. Mr. Simpson, as he did so, was in the act of stowing away into a secure breast-pocket, an

extremely bulky pocket-book, into which he had that moment consigned a large amount drawn from the counter, and his face beamed with the satisfaction attendant upon the knowledge of having done a good—(good, means, in the city, prudent, wealthy, respectable, and many other adjectives not contemplated by lexicographers)—we say, that Mr. Simpson felt that he had just done a good thing.

“Ha! my dear Mr. Vernon, how happy I am to see you,” said the old gentleman.

“Always happy to see Mr. Simpson,” returned Vernon, with a polite bow. “Can I have the pleasure of doing anything for you?”

“Nothing, nothing,” replied Mr. Simpson. “I was compelled to come here myself this morning; my clerks are so engaged. Never keep more cats than can catch mice, eh?”

“Nor I,” said Vernon, carelessly; “and they seem to have enough to do just now,” and he glanced at the counter.

“By the bye,” said Mr. Simpson, looking

up with a half servile, half insolent expression of face, "anything wrong in the banking world? you seem to be busy to-day; very, very busy?"

"Yes," said Vernon, coolly, "we are very busy in our own affairs; and we don't seem to be the only people in the world who take an interest in them. You have, I presume, drawn out your balance, Mr. Simpson?" and Vernon looked, for a confirmation, towards one of the cashiers.

"He has, sir," replied the clerk.

"Why, yes, I—I have," said Mr. Simpson, slightly confounded.

"Let it, then, be understood," replied Vernon, "that you have withdrawn your account. Mr. Brown," and he turned towards another of the clerks, "make up Mr. Simpson's book, and let it be given to him. Good morning, Mr. Simpson," and, lifting his hat politely, Vernon left the place.

Immediately on his departure, several of the customers who, during his stay, had been gazing

upon the banker with a speculative eye, and who, having heard his communication with Simpson, regarded him with that mixture of awe and reverence which wealth never fails of exciting in the breasts of such persons, whispered each other, and replaced their pocket-books, hastening to their respective houses to communicate the fact that all was "right" with Messrs. Warkworth, Vernon, and Co.; and, indeed, feeling a much greater degree of certainty of their stability than Vernon himself, as he walked up Lombard-street, or than Warkworth, who sat on thorns in his private counting-house, could conscientiously take it upon themselves to believe.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Oh ! how impatience gains upon the soul
When the long-promised hour of joys draw near !
How slow the tardy moments seem to roll ! ”

“ All these he wielded to command assent :
But where he wish'd to win, so well unbent,
That kindness cancell'd fear in those who heard.”

IT is now time to return to our friends, the Hopwoods, who have been neglected for an unconscionably long period. The retired jeweller had amused himself, much after his old fashion, with keeping the accounts of his garden, his poultry-yard, and pig-sty. Like the retired warrior, who wiles away his inactivity with wars, and rumours of wars, and that “mimic fight,” the chase, does the *ci-devant* man of business again taste the joys of the counting-

house, in the imaginary traffic attendant on domestic expenditure.

Mr. Hopwood was the most regular man of business possible; he had an account against every hen and every pig in his establishment. The account of each individual was duly charged with the barley and barley-meal consumed; and each hen had credit allowed for eggs laid, and each pig, at his demise, was credited with his pork, when the balance of profit or loss was duly ascertained. No fresh apples ever found their way to Mr. Hopwood's table—not from any spirit of parsimony, but merely from the pure spirit of business. When the apples were gathered, they were always spread in a room for the purpose, and when any were wanted for domestic purposes, those that were “going” were always first selected. The same system was adopted with the eggs. They were always marked with the date of the day on which they were laid, and the most ancient of date were always used first. These

accounts, with occasionally a trip to town, to arrange his numerous money transactions, formed Mr. Hopwood's occupations.

But these, though in his opinion highly necessary, were mere mechanical affairs, and subordinate, compared with the still higher objects of his interest and ambition—the education of his daughter, and the aggrandizement of his family. The latter had been the principal subject of his thoughts for many a day ; but, since his interview with Lord Walgrave, it had assumed something like a distinctness, whilst formerly the idea had merely flitted, as it were, over his dreaming fancy. But now the supposition was no longer airy and unreal ; Lord Walgrave had pronounced it possible—nay, even probable ; and the man of business confidently looked forward to the accomplishment of his hopes, with an earnestness which never flagged. Something whispered to him that these glittering expectations were to be realized through the medium of Lord Walgrave ; but

in what manner, he hardly dared suggest to himself. And then, again, when he looked, with truly parental pride, on his daughter, and thought of her beauty, the extreme innocence of her character, the result of that system in which he had so scrupulously brought her up, some vague notion crossed his mind, that she might, by a splendid alliance, elevate her family to the position, the daily contemplation of which, even afar off, had become a positive necessity to him. These speculations, discussed with Mrs. Hopwood, served to occupy his mind, which, if left to its own natural resources, would, before long, have been fain to betake itself to traffic again, from sheer *ennui*. But the ultimate prospect of family honours forbade such an injurious contemplation; he therefore lived upon the hope of some day seeing his brilliant expectations realized.

But still, day after day, and week after week, passed, and Lord Walgrave did not honour the man of business with his presence.

Mr. Hopwood could not help thinking it “very odd.” He had promised so sincerely—so very sincerely ; he had taken such an interest in the family ; he had inquired, almost affectionately, after Mrs. Hopwood, whom he had declared to be a “perfect treasure.”

“Those were his very words, my dear,” said Mr. Hopwood, to his amiable spouse, as they were chatting one morning, after breakfast, “‘a perfect treasure!’ and then the charming way in which he said them. Ah ! there is such a grace in the manner of a nobleman, which no one can understand or learn, who has not been on the most familiar footing with that class of society ;”—and the little gentleman elevated his polished crown full half an inch higher, as if he was fully aware of his own advantage in that particular.

“Yes, my dear, I can understand that,” said Mrs. Hopwood ; “manners are like the measles—always easy when they come naturally.”

“My dear,” gravely remarked Mr. Hop-

wood, to whom the comparison was ‘odious,’ “you should never hint at such subjects when you speak of noblemen.”

“Do noblemen never have the measles, then, pa?” asked Georgina, raising her eyes from a collar which she was working for Agnes.

“No, my love,” said Mr. Hopwood rather peremptorily, as if the subject was ungracious; “that is to say—at least, if they have, it must be *very* slightly;—and then, my dear,” he continued, turning to Mrs. Hopwood, “he asked so kindly, so very kindly, about——” and here he nodded his head in the direction of his daughter, and added, in a mysterious whisper, “the interest he took was quite remarkable. I should—not—be—surprised——” and he measured out his words as carefully as if he was unthreading a string of pearls; “but that is neither—here nor—there——but mark—what—I say—you understand——” Mrs. Hopwood nodded her head in as equally mysterious a manner, as if she fully comprehended

her husband's signal nod ; and Georgina peeped up from her work, though her fingers were apparently still rapidly plying the needle, and nodded her head too, as if she too understood her respected parents' peculiar phraseology.

“ Is your friend Lord Walgrave a young man, papa ? ” asked Georgina carelessly, after a short pause.

“ Quite, my love,” replied her father ; “ I should think about five or six and thirty—he can't be forty ;—but if he is, I don't know how it is,—noblemen never look so old as other men do. There was his gracious Majesty, George the Fourth—do you remember, my dear, with what kindness—what affability—he returned my salute, when I uncovered, as he passed the road here ? I always thought his Majesty knew me, his look was so *very* particular. Do you recollect, my dear ? ”

“ Perfectly,” returned Mrs. Hopwood ; “ but he *was* a gentleman.”

“ Gentleman ! ”—he was a king ! ” said Mr.

Hopwood in a serious tone of reproof ; “ well, although he was a *little* in years, I never *could* believe him to be old ; but then the higher classes are so peculiar.”

“ Is your friend Lord Walgrave a handsome man, papa ? ” asked Georgina, after another slight pause.

“ Remarkably so, my love ; and it is singular the advantage the aristocracy appear to possess in this respect, as well as in manner and conversation. It is not surprising that those who have the honour of their acquaintance—that is, their intimate acquaintance,—I might say friendship, should respect them so highly.”

“ Georgina, my love, what are you looking at so earnestly, through the window ? ” asked Mrs. Hopwood.

“ Oh ! mamma, such a dear little pony, such a love ! do come and look at it,” said Georgina, clapping her hands with almost infantile delight. The parents exchanged mutual glances of satisfaction ; a placid smile beamed on the

countenance of each as they surveyed their treasure.

“Charming simplicity—a mind like writing-paper,” muttered the enraptured father; “a little pony, ha ! ha !”

“Dear, simple-hearted child !” whispered the fond mother; “delighted even with trifles.”

“System of education,” continued Mr. Hopwood.

“The eye of a mother !” added Mrs. Hopwood.

At the moment when Georgina was expressing her unfeigned delight at the “little pony,” it so happened that there was another object of some interest, in the shape of a handsome young man of about five-and-twenty years of age, slowly passing the railing, which divided the carriage-way that led to the house, from the road. He held a book in his hand; and Georgina jumping up to the window, in admiration of the “little pony,” attracted his attention; but neither his fixed gaze (of surprise, or ad-

miration, as the case might be) nor his lingering walk as he passed the house, disconcerted the innocent girl, so intent was she on the “little pony.”

This little trait had scarcely passed, and the head of the family had dismissed from his mind for a short time, his aristocratic aspirations, and resumed his quiet contemplative—or, we ought rather to say, calculating mood, (which accorded better with him, when abstruse financial operations were passing in his mind, his pen perched behind his ear, and his forehead resting upon his forefinger,) when an unwonted exclamation of surprise from Georgina, partially suspended the complicated action of his “calculating machine.”

“Well! my love,” cried both her parents at the same time, in a tone of inquiry; “another little pony, eh?—ha! ha!” ejaculated her father playfully.

“No papa, but a beautiful cabriolet, and *such* a horse; and a groom with a cockade, I

declare !” exclaimed Georgina stepping back from the window, and looking intently through the wire blind.

“ Well, my love, repeated the parent, removing the pen from his ear, and half rising from his seat, “ and what then.”

“ O papa, they have stopped here, I declare, and the servant is trying to open the gate.”

The old gentleman threw away the pen he held in his hand, with a sort of nervous irritability, and jumping from his chair, ran to his daughter’s side, and in the action nearly upset his wife, who was with equal rapidity effecting the same movement.

“ It is—it is—it is,” cried Mr. Hopwood, the moment he cast his eyes upon the equipage, and snapping his fingers, he danced about the room like a spinning dervise, a fashion totally at variance with his usual staid and sober demeanour. “ I told you so,” he continued ; “ I knew he would come, he respects me, he is my friend, he loves me, he shall love you, he will

love us all. Let us all go to receive him, we cannot do him too much honour."

"But papa," asked Georgina, looking with astonishment at the unwonted vagaries of her respected parent; "who is to love us all?"

"Lord Walgrave, you puss," cried the delighted father; "there he is, my particular and intimate friend, Lord Walgrave—come from London on purpose to see me—to see your mamma—to see you—to offer us his friendship—his assistance."

At this intimation Mrs. Hopwood began to pull the bell, as if some of the family were in fits; for her husband in the plenitude of his joy, had forgotten that Lord Walgrave was making his way to the door. The long-legged boy and Susan rushed up stairs with dutiful haste at the energetic summons, and the latter came plump against her master, who was going in and out of the room as if he had lost his wits. She was instantly sent to the drawing-room with a candle, to set light to the fire, and

blow up a flame as quick as a pair of bellows could effect it. Mrs. Hopwood darted off to her bed-room, to make some trifling alteration in her toilet, which she considered was due to the occasion ; her helpmate still continuing to pace about like one demented, walking quickly from the fire to the door, and then back again to the fire, hardly conscious of what he was about, and exclaiming continually, “ I knew he would come—I was sure of it—he esteems me—he is my friend !”

We must do Georgina the justice to report, that, under these trying circumstances, she was the only collected person in the establishment ; for without at all heeding the movements of some, and the exclamations of others, she seated herself at the window, concealed by the blind, and watched the unfastening of the gate, and the progress of the cabriolet to the door ; and saw, with no visible surprise, or even curiosity, a gentleman descend, remarkable in nothing, unless it were the extreme plainness of his at-

tire, a pleasant expression of countenance, and an easy unostentatious manner.

By this time the long-legged boy had opened the door as wide as its hinges permitted, and the *ci-devant* jeweller stood in the hall, with his body half inclined, and his countenance and manner evincing his deep sense of the honour which his noble friend conferred upon him by this visit.

“Well, friend Hopwood,” said Lord Walgrave, advancing cordially towards him, and shaking him by the hand, “I am come to see you at last.”

Hopwood bowed to the hand he held, as if he would have worshipped it, and muttered some entirely unintelligible words.

“So many engagements have intervened, that I could not get down before,” continued the nobleman.

Hopwood bowed again still lower.

“But now that I have found you out, I shall certainly see you more frequently. “A

very pretty place indeed," continued his lordship, looking round at the hall lamp, umbrella stand, and other articles. A remarkably pretty place;—I admire your taste."

Hopwood could only bow; intelligible language he had none; he could only mutter something of which the words "honour," "undeserved," "overwhelming," "humble roof," were alone heard at intervals.

"Tut, tut, my friend, not at all;" said Lord Walgrave, who seemed perfectly to comprehend his attempts at language; "I am always proud to visit my friends; but come, you must introduce me to Mrs. Hopwood and your daughter, I long to have the pleasure of their acquaintance."

"I'm sure, my lord, they can never be sufficiently sensible of the obligation," stammered Hopwood between pauses, at the same time making his way gradually to the foot of the stairs, and then inclining his body, he extended his hands, to point to his lordship the way, as

if he were showing a parcel of goods to a carriage customer.

Lord Walgrave did all in his power, in his passage up stairs, to reassure his embarrassed friend, in which, by the time he had reached the drawing-room, he had tolerably well succeeded. Here they found Susan on her knees, blowing away at the blazing wood, with all the energy of a good stout pair of arms, and bellows of formidable dimensions. In her zeal for the honour of the house, she might, perhaps, have been adding the tribute of her own breath; for her face looked as blazing as a brass warming-pan.

“Get more wood, Susan; get plenty of wood—you have let the fire get too low, and the morning is chilly. How came you to let the fire get so low?” said Hopwood, fearful that his noble visitor might discern the spirit of economy which ruled the household—at the same time giving the fire an energetic poke. “But I hope your Lordship will excuse it. If I had but known of your lordship’s coming——”

“ There is no need of it, indeed, Hopwood,” said his lordship, “ your fire is quite good enough ; I am not at all cold.”

“ It is our custom, my lord, I assure you,” said Hopwood, “ we are all fond of a good fire ;” and on the return of Susan with an apron full of wood, he hurled it on the fire, with a reckless prodigality, which Susan thought even the occasion, extraordinary as it was, could hardly excuse.

“ Where is your mistress, Susan ; why don’t she come ?” continued her bewildered master ; “ say that my Lord Walgrave is waiting to see her, and go and look for my daughter ;” and again he applied the poker with a sort of nervous energy.

“ Now Hopwood, do not let me derange your household ;” said Lord Walgrave, with the endeavour to pacify his inquietude ; “ and pray let the ladies take their time.”

“ Ah, my lord, you are so very kind in all things,” stammered Hopwood ; “ but I could

wish them to fly to acknowledge the honour you do them, for my part—”

“In good time, my friend, in good time,” observed the nobleman, almost pitying the agitation of his host: “I beg that I may not be treated with any ceremony; amongst friends you know it is not required.”

“Indeed, my lord, I cannot do enough to express the sense I feel of your lordship’s condescension, but—”

“For God’s sake, Hopwood, take care what you are about with that fire,” interrupted Lord Walgrave, removing his seat further from it;—“why man, you will have it large enough for an ox-roasting, presently.”

“Hi! hi! my lord,” simpered his prodigal entertainer, “now, do you think it large? its nothing to what we have generally, we are all so fond of good fires.”

“Egad! my friend, then you must be salamanders, if you can stand more than that,” said the nobleman laughing, and taking another seat

still further, whilst his too generous friend, made another assault upon the grate.

“I hope your lordship intends to stay and take dinner with us,” said Hopwood.

“No, friend Hopwood, not to-day, it is impossible :—I dine with the Russian ambassador.”

Hopwood let the poker fall from his hand, at the very mention of the word “ambassador;” the magnificence of the idea paralyzed him. “At least, my lord, you will have a lunch; you must have an appetite after your ride;” and, having resumed possession of the poker, he ran to the door, calling at the top of his voice, “Susan, Susan, tell your mistress to make haste, what *can* she be about? Ah! I hear her coming;” and then with the poker in one hand, and his wife in the other, he added, “my dear, allow me to present you to Lord Walgrave, who has done us the honour to come from town to see us.”

With a sort of mincing step, and with many a

profound curtesy, did Mrs. Hopwood enter the presence. She had been some few minutes in her chamber, as we before observed, for the purpose of adornment ; but such had been her haste, that she had hardly time to do justice to her taste. She determined, however, to cover all deficiencies in style, by profusion of ornament, and after having touched her cheek with the slightest possible tint of the “hare’s-foot,” (for cheeks will fade with years) she pinned a bunch of flowers here, and another there, till her head resembled a huge bouquet, when unfortunately, as she was about to give the finishing touch, she heard her husband’s excited voice to Susan ; snatching, therefore, a bunch of full-blown roses, she pinned them hurriedly in their place, and casting but too cursory a glance, the general effect seemed so undeniable, that she rushed down stairs, fearful of driving her husband to despair, by her continued absence.

Lord Walgrave rose to receive her, and taking her hand, led her to a seat. “I need

not say how happy I am to make the acquaintance of the wife of my most estimable friend, Hopwood," commenced the nobleman ; but, before he could proceed, he was siezed with such a fit of coughing that he was forced to resume his seat on the sofa, and cover his face with his handkerchief.

The fact was, that though Lord Walgrave was a man of fashion, and consequently had his feelings and countenance under great control, yet there sometimes occur such unforeseen, such sudden attacks upon our risible muscles, that even the well-trained habits of a man of society, find it impossible to resist them. Unfortunately, as Mrs. Hopwood took her seat, the eyes of Lord Walgrave came upon a level with her head-dress, and there, erect, amidst a profusion of roses and geraniums, stood the identical "hare's-foot" which had created the bloom upon her cheek, and which, having become entangled amongst the wires of the last bunch of roses, was with them transferred to its present

unlucky position, producing, it must be confessed, a most extraordinary and startling effect.

“Dear me ! dear me ! what a cold your lordship has taken,” said Hopwood, agitated beyond measure, and fidgetting about with the poker in his hand ; “this room is so cold, I’m afraid your lordship did wrong in removing from the fire,” and here he emptied the scuttle upon the blazing contents of the grate. “I should never forgive myself if I thought—”

“Now do not disturb yourself, Hopwood,” interposed Lord Walgrave, somewhat recovering from the effects of his surprise, but not daring to turn his eyes in the direction of the lady of the house ; “I must have taken a little cold coming down, but it will pass.”

“Will you let me get you a little broth, my lord ?” asked Mrs. Hopwood, “a little broth with some chopped parsley in it—chopped parsley is a most excellent thing for a cold.”

“No, my dear madam, thank you, it may pass off directly ; I am subject—” but here his

lordship's cough again became so violent, that he was obliged to take refuge in the folds of his handkerchief.

“Do, my dear, pray fetch the cough drops we take in treacle,” said Hopwood ; “what can we do ? If your lordship would but come a little nearer the fire ;” and the more his lordship coughed, the more did Mr. Hopwood stir the fire, and the more did Mrs. Hopwood, in her anxiety to aid his lordship, parade before his vision, the apparition of the “hare's foot,” which was the exciting cause of the mischief.

At length his lordship's paroxysms were checked, by the opportune arrival of Georgina, who advanced just within the door, half timidly, yet without the slightest approach to awkwardness, and bowing gracefully to Lord Walgrave, went to her mother.

“Ah ! Georgina my love, you are come at last ; let me present you to Lord Walgrave ;” said her father.

“Really !” said Lord Walgrave rising, “and is this young lady your daughter, Hopwood ?”

“Our only child, my lord,” answered the proud parent.

“Then, indeed, I may say sincerely, that I congratulate you upon your good fortune, in calling so very charming a young lady your own,” said Lord Walgrave, advancing towards her in his usually graceful manner, to offer his hand.

Georgina, before she received or acknowledged the compliment of his lordship, had detected the anomaly of her mother's head-dress, and with a rapid and almost imperceptible movement transferred it from its singular position to the fire; while Mrs. Hopwood, thinking she had only arranged a stray flower, smiled her approbation. This delicate address of the young lady was not lost upon Lord Walgrave, who, indeed, was surprised, not only at the beauty of Georgina, but by her unembarrassed, yet modest deportment, so totally at variance with her parents' eager attempts at hospitality. He had expected to see a girl

much after the fashion of the family, and he found a very charming young person, whose manners and appearance would not have discredited the circle in which he himself moved. Georgina had not made the slightest addition or alteration in her dress ; she had merely given an additional gloss to her already bright and beautiful curls, and her *toilette* was complete.

“ Well, my friend Hopwood, I can only say, that you did not boast of your family without reason,” said Lord Walgrave, looking at Georgina with manifest admiration ; “ you are a very happy man—I could almost say that I envy you.”

“ Why, my lord,” replied the master of the mansion, “ I believe I may say, that my position in life is comfortable enough. But pray, my lord, take a seat a little nearer the fire ; you have a sad cold, indeed.”

“ Oh, no, no ; for God’s sake don’t put any more coals on that fire ; a single inch nearer

and I shall be broiled. I shall be much more comfortable here," and his lordship seated himself by the side of Georgina.

Here Mrs. Hopwood cast a sidelong look of intelligence at her husband, who responded to it, by thrusting the poker into the very vitals of the fire, with the recklessness of one who never looks in the "Price Current" to see the cost of sea-coal.

"But how is it that you have never introduced your daughter to town, Hopwood?" asked Lord Walgrave, with his eyes still turned towards Georgina. "You must not conceal her in these country wilds any longer. She will be an ornament to society."

"My lord, you are very kind," answered the man of business. "Our first study has been to educate her in those principles which will be of service to her in life. I must say, as a father, that I have no fault to find with her. She is a very innocent, good girl."

"All which is most delightful to hear," said

the nobleman. "But still it is time for her to enter a little into life. It gives tone to the manners, and ought not to be postponed ; and I think I dare venture to say, that the experiment would not be disagreeable to the young lady herself."

"If my parents thought it proper for me, my lord, I should, I dare say, have much pleasure," answered Georgina modestly ; "otherwise, I am quite contented with the society of my father and mother, and the friends we have around us."

"Charmingly said," observed Lord Walgrave ; "and I am sure you deserve all the care your worthy parents have bestowed on you. Unfortunately I am a bachelor," he continued, turning to Mrs. Hopwood, "and you know, madam, we are powerless in such matters, otherwise, I should be delighted to offer your amiable daughter the introduction which she would receive at my house. But the ladies take all these things upon themselves ; bache-

lors have no voice; they can do little for the family of a friend."

"My lord, I do not know how to thank you for the interest you take in my family," said Hopwood, with a low inclination; and Mrs. Hopwood likewise said some words about gratitude.

"My dear friends, I only regret that I cannot be of the service to you I wish, and particularly with regard to that charming girl," continued Lord Walgrave. "But everything must have an end; so must a single life; and, indeed, friend Hopwood, I have serious thoughts of setting my affairs in order, and taking a wife."

"Oh, my lord," exclaimed Mrs. Hopwood, "it is a thousand pities that you should be unmarried."

"Oh, but my dear madam, the difficulty after all is, to find a wife," continued his lordship. "I have been long a convert to the opinion that a married life is the most de-

sirable; and looking round at your charming little circle, one must be convinced of it. But, after all, as I said, where am I to find a handsome, accomplished, amiable girl, that would adorn the high station to which I should raise her, and possessing, at the same time, by the way, some odd thousands, as a matter of form or custom? And as good conservatives, we must not break through old customs," he added, laughing. "But where am I to look for such a girl to do honour to an illustrious ancestry?"—here his lordship gently took the hand of Georgina—as if in a fit of abstraction—between his own—"and at the same time," he continued, "bring happiness to an English nobleman's fireside?"

At this affecting appeal of Lord Walgrave, Mrs. Hopwood applied her handkerchief to her eyes, and the amiable head of the family, putting the poker down, was rocking himself backward and forward in his chair, to conceal his emotions. But most unfortunately, at the

very crisis, as it were, of his sympathetic feelings, forgetting his precarious situation, he overbalanced himself, and fell upon the floor, flat upon his back.

“Good God ! my dear friend, you are hurt !” exclaimed Lord Walgrave, hastening to the assistance of the prostrate Hopwood, and quickly raising him from the floor.

“Oh, my dear husband !” cried the anxious wife ; and Georgina awaited the result with equal anxiety.

“Nothing, my dear—nothing at all,” said the amiable husband and parent, rubbing his back, and bowing his obligation to his noble friend for his assistance. “A mere scratch, I assure you—but to inconvenience your lordship ! Indeed, I can hardly forgive my awkwardness. But, my dear love,” cried the head of the family, as if suddenly recollecting himself, and still rubbing the lower part of his back, “I declare we have totally forgotten that Lord Walgrave has driven some miles to give us the honour of this visit.”

Before Mr. Hopwood could finish the sentence, the quick-witted mistress of the mansion bustled out of the room to superintend the management of the “tray,” as a lunch for Lord Walgrave could not be entrusted to the hands of Susan. Georgina followed her mother.

“I declare, Hopwood, without any compliments,” said Lord Walgrave, “you possess a most charming girl for a daughter.”

“Your lordship flatters me,” said the humble-minded Hopwood, certain visions floating in his mind, after having observed the nobleman take the hand of his daughter, and which, indeed, had been the principal cause of his catastrophe. “The girl is well enough, my lord; but, to have the good opinion of your lordship, I am sure I may well be proud. If I can but find, some time hence of course, a respectable husband of her own station, why—”

“Of her own station!” interposed his lordship. “Now, seriously, my very good friend, Hopwood—I speak to you confidentially—I

really intend to marry ; now suppose—I say, suppose,” he added, laughing, “ that I should ask you for your daughter ?”

“ What, my lord ! you ! you ask for my daughter ?” cried the enraptured Hopwood ; “ oh, my lord, impossible ! such humble people as ourselves could never anticipate such an honour. But, I see, my lord, you are joking with me.”

“ Listen, my dear sir,” said the nobleman. gravely ; “ you would doubtless wish to marry your daughter well.”

“ It is my most earnest prayer,” cried Hopwood, clasping his hands in the attitude of invocation, and nearly losing his equilibrium again.

“ Now, what fortune may she calculate upon ?” asked his lordship.

“ I can give her £50,000 down on her marriage day, without injury to myself,” said the ex-jeweller, speaking more confidently when money was the subject matter of discourse.

“She is likewise to inherit her uncle’s valuable estate in Cornwall, who made his fortune by a tin mine, and who has promised, likewise to give her something handsome on her marriage. He is older than myself, and now, poor man, very infirm. She has likewise £14,000 left her by her grandmother, which, with the accumulated interest, is now nearly £20,000; and, my lord, to be candid with you, I can reckon myself any day in the year a £200,000 man,—thanks to prudence and success.”

“Bravo! a most splendid summing up!” said the nobleman. “Now, Hopwood, I will be equally candid with you. My father, the earl, is rich, but I have only an allowance from him of £2,000 a year. It is true, I have a splendid estate in Gloucestershire; but many years since, in my foolish time, I raised money upon it in different sums, now amounting to £85,000, the interest of which preys upon my very vitals, and makes me pennyless.”

“If your lordship is really serious,” inter-

rupted Hopwood, eagerly, "I will pay it off in a week."

"Good! we shall soon understand each other, I see. My private debts are not worth speaking about: somewhere under £8,000."

"A trifle, my lord," cried Hopwood, relieving the agony of expectation by emptying the fresh contents of the coal-scuttle upon the blazing fuel, now half way up the chimney.

"Pray have mercy upon me with that fire, Hopwood," said his lordship, fanning himself with his handkerchief. "The estate, when free, I should entail upon my second son, if I should have one, as our family property, which I succeed to, is already large."

"Excellent, my lord," said Hopwood, "and you would have abundant means to provide for whatever family you might have, as of course all my property will fall in in due course."

"Right; and with respect to a town establishment?"

"I have two mansions in Grosvenor-square—

my own freeholds ; one of which your lordship might have possession of in six months."

"Can't be better ; and the expense of furniture?"

"I will furnish it from top to bottom."

"Equipage?"

"Your lady shall choose her own, at my whole and sole cost."

"And my wife's jointure?"

"I'll tell you, my lord," said the man of business, who was now in his element. "I will redeem your estate, and give the title-deeds into your lordship's hands. The house in Grosvenor-square, furniture, equipage, and plate, shall be settled upon your lady for life ; and the bequest of her grandmother, together with her uncle's present, and perhaps a trifle more from myself, shall be invested for her jointure."

"Done !" cried his lordship, rising quickly from the sofa, his habits of play at that moment coming uppermost, as he foresaw a splen-

did establishment. "A bargain, Hopwood! You have offered like a man of business, and a man of sense," and he presented his hand to the half-bewildered jeweller, which he took as a ratification of their contract; confidence failing the latter the moment figures ceased to occupy the prominent part. "But this must be a secret! not a word! I would not have anybody know a syllable of these preliminaries until my own private arrangements are completed, for the world."

"Not a breath, my lord! Depend on my discretion!"

"In the meantime, Hopwood, take care your daughter enters into no engagements or entanglements of any kind."

"It is utterly impossible, my lord. She shall not stir out of the house—no one shall enter into it. I will lock her up."

"No, no, my good friend, not so fast," said his lordship, smiling; "common caution—that is all. I shall be obliged to be absent for a time, but you shall hear from me."

A fresh appeal to the poker was all the answer Hopwood could for the moment make, for his heart was bursting the button-holes of his waistcoat, at the expectation of so near an accomplishment of the darling object which had for so long a time occupied his thoughts by day and his visions by night. But the arrival of the "tray," decked with all the delicacies which Mrs. Hopwood's ingenuity could effect at so short a notice, interrupted the further progress of Hopwood's rapture, else there is no knowing to what it might have carried him.

The ladies again made their appearance, and Lord Walgrave, taking his seat by the side of Georgina, was assiduous in paying her those little attentions which a man of fashion knows so well how to give effect to. Hopwood all the time was making grimaces to his wife, to call her attention to the other parties, and trod upon her toe so sharply that she let fall the mustard-pot on the carpet. Indeed, the good gentleman seemed almost beside himself in the

abundance of his joy. He drank off a glass of vinegar instead of wine; gave a spoonful of salt instead of sugar to Georgina; he laughed and talked; insisted upon his noble guest eating what he had no wish for, and drinking what he did not like. But those entertaining little *contretemps*, proceeding from the old gentleman's overflowing delight, were suddenly checked by a noise on the stairs, and the abrupt entrance of Susan, the cook, and the long-legged boy, brandishing their arms in the air, and alarm depicted in their countenances.

“O madam!” cried Susan.

“Save yourselves!” echoed the cook.

“The house is on fire!” roared the boy.

The latter intimation acted like an electric shock upon the party.

“Send for the engines! Send for the police!” exclaimed Hopwood, stamping about the room like a maniac.

“Save, my lord!—save, my lord!”

“Stay, my good friends,” said Lord Wal-

grave gravely ; “ I dare say there is no occasion for alarm ; it is, doubtless, the chimney on fire.”

“ Yes it is, your honour’s lordship,” cried the boy ; it *is* the chimbley !”

“ Ah ! it is your infernal poker, Hopwood ! never mind, its a mere nothing ; tell my servant to go upon the roof—he is a clever fellow—he knows what to do, and Hopwood, do see that he is supplied with a blanket and plenty of water, and the fire will be out in five minutes. I will see to the ladies.”

The master of the house, reassured by the steady orders of Lord Walgrave, left the room, followed by his alarmed domestics, and presently a train of persons were making their way to the roof, carrying water in every available utensil.

In the meantime, Georgina had fainted in the arms of her noble admirer, and Mrs. Hopwood, seeing the situation of her daughter, and thinking, perhaps, that she could not be in better

hands, ceased to struggle against her fears, and with a faint scream, extended herself upon the sofa, and closed her eyes in sweet oblivion.

Lord Walgrave, as we have before said, was quite a man of the world, and these little domestic events, such as a house on fire, and ladies in a state of insensibility—things which might ruffle an ordinary mind, had not the slightest effect upon him. Indeed, his situation was rather pleasing than otherwise. He had in his arms the girl whom he really admired, and he knew such a little accident “did not kill.” Accordingly, he very leisurely chafed her hands, admiring, at the same time, their delicacy and shape, and wondering how she, the daughter of homely people, could be possessed of them. The transparent whiteness too, of her forehead, as he drew back her shining curls to rub her temples with his fine cambric handkerchief, steeped in eau de Cologne, (a small bottle of which he always carried with him) and the delicate roundness of her neck—indeed the per-

fect contour of her figure—for it was symmetry itself, carried his admiration to its height.

“Egad, its singular!” he articulated, as he bent over her in pleased surprise—“she is perfectly charming; an ornament to any circle.”

By this time the water began to pour down the chimney, extinguishing the fire, but raising a most suffocating smoke. Lord Walgrave then opened the window, and at the same time Mrs. Hopwood opened her eyes, faintly crying, in a voice just above her breath—“Is the fire got under yet?”

“Yes, madam; there is no longer any danger of burning, we stand in greater risk of being drowned,” replied his lordship, still occupied with Georgina; and, indeed, the water was pouring down into the room as if they had let loose a reservoir on the roof.

“Ah! my lord, how kind this is of you to take care of us,” again muttered Mrs. Hopwood.

“I only do my duty—and an agreeable one,

if I can render any assistance to you," said his lordship, rubbing the temples of Georgina.

"And my daughter?" asked Mrs. Hopwood.

"Much better," replied his lordship, who did not appear to grudge his time, if it had lasted all day; but Mr. Hopwood at last arrived, rubbing his forehead, and puffing with his exertion, to relieve his lordship in his pleasing task.

"It is over; thank God it is over," cried Hopwood, throwing himself into a seat; "that servant of yours, my lord, is invaluable, we owe our lives to him; but, Georgina, my child—thank you, my lord, for your care, you are so kind, she had better be taken to her own room."

Georgina now opened her eyes, very opportunely, (as she frequently did,) and after a slight effort, thanked Lord Walgrave with great innocence and delicacy of manner.

Mrs. Hopwood also left her position on the

sofa. "I am sure, my dear, we all of us owe our best thanks to Lord Walgrave, for the attention he has paid us," said Mrs. Hopwood to her husband; "I don't know what we should have done."

"Pray think nothing of that, my dear madam," said his lordship; "but it seems to me, that whilst we have escaped one danger, we are risking another; there is water enough to float a boat."

"Bless my heart, so there is," said the ex-jeweller; "the room is full; what shall we do?—and my lord has got such a cold too."

"The simplest plan would be to move into another room," said Lord Walgrave.

"Dear me, so it would," said Mr. Hopwood:—"how foolish not to think of that before; will your lordship do me the honour to step down into my little parlour?—we have a fire there."

"Any where you please, so that the ladies accompany us," said his lordship, offering his

arm to Georgina; and the party proceeded to occupy the parlour the family had quitted on their aristocratic friend's arrival. The fire was reduced to a few embers by their long absence, and Hopwood immediately replenished it; but whether the chimney was deranged by the recent operations on the roof, or from whatever cause, there seemed to be a conspiracy against comfort, for the room forthwith was filled with smoke, no particle finding its way, but through the roundabout medium of open doors and windows. Lord Walgrave coughed, but laughed heartily, and Hopwood fidgetted about, struck his forehead with his hand, and declared himself the most unfortunate man on earth.

“Never mind,” said his lordship, whose good temper seemed to improve with the claims made on it—“it is only another way of showing me your house. Let us go into another room, my dear fellow, or we shall be choked outright.”

“If your lordship will condescend to accom-

pany us into my daughter's little study," suggested Hopwood.

"Nothing could be better," said Lord Walgrave; and the party again adjourned, and his lordship had an opportunity of seeing the young lady's drawing portfolio, her selection of books and music, and hearing from Mrs. Hopwood an account of her masters, and what they said of her genius and progress.

Lord Walgrave was now waiting to take his leave, as he had already overstayed his time; but he could not well leave them without abruptness immediately after the accident, and certainly not till the ladies were quite recovered from their fright.

"I cannot prevail on his lordship to stay the day with us, my dear," said Hopwood, with a desponding look to his wife.

"Another time I shall be delighted, my dear friends," said Lord Walgrave; "but the ambassador expects me, and you know we must not disappoint people of consideration."

“ Oh, not for the world !” said Hopwood, energetically.

“ I certainly shall return—most certainly,” added his lordship, looking at Georgina. Here Hopwood rolled his eyes about, and made signs like a telegraph ; and his wife, who understood the hint which her husband thus delicately conveyed, placed her finger on her mouth, in the attitude of intelligence and caution.

“ And that shortly—I trust very shortly,” added his lordship, taking the hand of Mrs. Hopwood, who was ready to expire with delight ; and then advancing to Georgina, he raised her hand to his lips, and repeated the pleasure he should have in shortly seeing her again ; at which Hopwood coughed hysterically, and looked out of the window to conceal his emotion. His lordship then quitted the hand of Georgina with a tender pressure, and again bowing to Mrs. Hopwood, left the room, accompanied by the master of the house. As

they descended the stone steps before the outer door, Lord Walgrave took his friend's arm, and whispered — “ Now, Sir Simon,” — But the nobleman's emphatic enunciation of the words produced such an effect on his companion, that he would inevitably have stumbled down the steps, with his nose on the gravel walk, had not his lordship supported him stoutly by the arm.

“ Hallo, Hopwood, my friend !” he cried, “ what's the matter ?”

“ Nothing, my lord, nothing—a mere stumble ! What was your lordship about to say ?”

“ Oh ! I rely on your discretion, Hopwood, in the business we have been talking about.”

“ Trust me, my dear lord—I am silent.”

“ I have no doubt we shall effect the arrangement, Hopwood ; for, to say the truth, I admire your daughter excessively—she has mind.”

“ You will find it so, my lord ; she knows more already than most young women of her age.”

“ I am sure of it—I am sure of it—in the meantime, farewell, my friend,” said his lordship, kindly shaking him by the hand ; “ if all goes right, you have a good chance of having your daughter a countess, and yourself a seat in parliament ;” and his lordship entered his cabriolet, and drove off.

Hopwood remained standing on the steps with his mouth open, straining his eyes after the carriage, and repeating, mechanically, “ Sir Simon ! seat in parliament ! daughter a countess !” until a smart pat upon the back from his wife caused him to bite his tongue, and brought him to himself ; when looking once more in the direction of the cabriolet, he re-entered his dwelling.

CHAPTER VII.

“Thou Julia, thou hast metamorphosed me ;
Made me neglect my studies—lose my time—
War with good counsel—set the world at naught.”

“Sir, you are most welcome to our house :
It must appear in other ways than words,
Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy.”

WHEN Vernon left the banking-house, he had no distinct idea in his own mind of any operation by which he should be able to raise anything like the sum required by the exigencies of the firm ; but the excitement caused by his conversation with Warkworth, and the confidence which had been infused into both parties by the remembrance that he had before raised very large sums at a few hours' notice speedily evaporated. Vernon felt that he was not the man that he had been—that he had not the pliable materials to work upon, which had

once been at his command ; and even if he had, the sense of his own insecurity, and the fear lest he should at last betray the confidence of his friends, would have divested him of that necessary self-possession, and implied variety of resources, indispensable to one whose business it is to raise money without compromising his credit.

And now, for the first time, the doubt occurred to him—"if Robinson should not succeed in his attempt to get Hopwood to discount the bills!"—a circumstance by no means unlikely, if that gentleman should by any chance have been made acquainted with the run upon the house. Vernon shuddered as the thought presented itself to him. But that could not be after all ; Robinson had waited upon Hopwood before he himself left Egham, and the thing would have been decided before this. At all events it was useless to think of looking after Robinson at present—he would see him that very night, if possible.

Vernon was a sanguine man, and never so much so as upon those dangerous occasions, when it was of the last importance that his hopes should be realized, occasions upon which men of a more discreet and provident nature feel the absolute necessity of having "two strings to their bow." And it might naturally be supposed, that in a case of extreme emergency like the present, even Vernon himself would have cast about for a second resource in the event of the other failing him. But he did not do so; on the contrary, although it certainly was his intention to wait upon a certain monied man at the west end of the town in the evening, he betook himself to the counting-house of perhaps the very last man in the city whom any body could reasonably expect him at such a moment to call upon.

The reader will doubtless remember, that in a previous chapter we furnished a brief account of Vernon's early acquaintance with Mr. Livingstone, and of the conduct of the latter

towards him. It is proper now to mention, that Vernon being one of those men who cannot remain consistent or resolute even in their enmities, hearing two or three years after the marriage of Livingstone and Miss Marshall that the man was in difficulties, waited upon him, and offered him a certain amount of credit at the banking-house. Livingstone having partially retrieved himself, subsequently opened an account with Warkworth, Vernon, and Co., and eventually, from over-speculation and other causes, became a bankrupt. His largest creditors by far were his friends, Messrs. Warkworth, Vernon, and Co., who were appointed assignees, and who, since it is quite true that *ex nihilo nihil fit*, were never in a situation to be able to declare a dividend.

By some strange association of ideas, which it would occupy too much time, and which perhaps it would be impossible after all to explain, Vernon bethought himself at this moment of his unfortunate friend Livingstone.

It may be—it is a consolation to a falling man—sometimes to visit those who have received obligations at his hands ; not so much for the purpose of procuring sympathy, as of witnessing that deference which he fears he may in some short space hence behold for the last time.

However this may be, Vernon soon found himself at the door of a counting-house, on the second floor of a large old-fashioned house in Great St. Helen's. Mr. Livingstone was within, and too happy to see his friend and benefactor, and the single clerk was dispatched to the West India docks for “ those samples,” in order that the gentlemen might enjoy their conversation in private.

“ And to what may I attribute the pleasure of seeing Mr. Vernon?” said Livingstone, blandly, after the first salutations were over. Can one so humble as myself be of the slightest service? If so, pray command me.”

“ No, Livingstone, I thank you, no,” replied Vernon; “ I merely looked in to hear

how you were getting on. How goes the world with you at present ?”

“ But poorly, sir, but poorly,” said Livingstone, shaking his head ; “ the scarcity of money in the market.” A glimpse of the earlier Livingstone was in his face at that moment, as he added with a smile—“ not that if it were ever so abundant, I should stand much chance of getting any.”

“ Money is, indeed, scarce at present ; we find it so in our house,” remarked Vernon. “ Should this state of things continue, Heaven knows what will be the consequence.”

“ By-the-bye, Vernon,” said Livingstone, suddenly grown more familiar, “ pardon me if I touch upon a disagreeable topic ; but I *did* hear this morning a circumstance that surprised—I may say distressed me ; let me hope there is no truth in it, a run upon—”

“ Our house,” interrupted Vernon ; “ it is true to a certain extent. There is no accounting for these things, and it is impossible to

guess who may be the next run upon ; there is one comfort, we do not fear the issue."

" True, true," said the other, "*you* have no cause, I am certain ; but such things are awkward, nevertheless ; nay, I do not know a house in London that would not feel itself more secure, by the loan of a few thousands. I wish, for my part, it were in my power to repay in part the obligations I feel myself under to you, my dear friend, by such an offer."

" Well, I believe you are sincere," returned Vernon ; " and, to say the truth, some such temporary assistance might be of service to us at the present moment."

" My acceptance of any use ?" suggested Livingstone.

Vernon shrugged his shoulders.

" No, I fear not—I am afraid not," said Livingstone, musing, or appearing to do so ; " there is *one thing*. With regard to myself," he continued, " I am not much interested in mercantile affairs ;—her property you know—"

“ Whose ? ” inquired Vernon, abstractedly.

“ Mrs. Livingstone’s ; you know her settlement of six hundred a year, which you refused to take, although she herself wished to give it up, when I was made a bankrupt.”

“ O, I remember,” said Vernon.

“ Now, do you know how you could make two people happy ? ” said Livingstone, after a prolonged pause, “ by coming to dine with us to-day, if you are not particularly engaged ; Mrs. Livingstone would be *so* delighted to see you ; indeed she has often thought it very unkind of you, that you should so entirely have forgotten your old friends.”

“ My dear fellow,” cried Vernon ; but he could not proceed. He was fairly dumb-founded by excess of surprise, a degree of which the reader will probably feel, when he remembers, as Vernon did, the manner in which his “ old friends ” had some years ago conducted themselves towards him.

“ I’ll tell you what I’ll do, Vernon ; ” said

Livingstone, and he attempted to look as one under the influence of an amiable excitement, and succeeded in doing so. "I'll tell you what I'll do," he repeated, "that is, if you approve of it, and will accompany me to Newington Green, where we now live;—I'll prevail upon Mrs. Livingstone to assign her settlement to you, for a few months, if it will be of any service. This, I am sure, she will be most happy to do, for you cannot imagine the respect and esteem she always expresses for you. My own obligations to you, Vernon, I can never forget, upon my soul I can't; excuse me," and at this moment Mr. Livingstone buried his face in his pocket-handkerchief; but whether to conceal his emotion, or the fact of its absence, we must not presume to say.

Vernon was deeply moved by this instance of his friend's generosity. If any sense of bitterness or of hostility had remained in his bosom, consequent upon Livingstone's conduct to him in former years, it had been dissipated in that

moment. He wrung Livingstone's hand with much fervour, and expressed, in the warmest terms, his sense of the other's noble behaviour ; to which Livingstone returned suitable and repeated acknowledgments.

“ If I could be certain,” resumed Vernon, “ that Mrs. Livingstone would be happy to see me, I myself should be glad to pay my respects to her ; but—”

“ Happy !” interrupted Livingstone, “ she would be delighted. Indeed, you don't know what a favourite you are in that quarter. We shall feel honoured by your company.”

The clerk returned at this moment.

“ Well, it is time that we should go now,” said Livingstone ; “ we dine at half-past-four ; a plain joint, nothing more. The Stamford Hill stage goes from the Flower-pot, over the way. We keep no carriage now,” he added with a sigh.

“ You must let me off early ;” said Vernon, taking his hat, “ for I have a great deal to do yet before to-morrow morning.”

“Business at the banking-house, I presume,” said Livingstone.

“Oh no, not that—all is arranged there for the present. Were it otherwise, do you think I could be absent for a moment?”

“True, true,” said Livingstone thoughtfully, as he locked a small iron safe, and put the key in his pocket. “Come, let us be gone,” and they proceeded to the Flower-pot, and took possession of two seats in the Stamford Hill stage.

And while these two gentlemen are on their way to Newington-green, let us communicate the hopes, the thoughts, and the speculations of each.

Livingstone perfectly well knew, or at the least believed, that there was no chance of the house of Warkworth and Vernon suffering from the panic just then commencing. The easy unconstraint, and perfectly tranquil manner and appearance of Vernon, favoured this conviction; and the words he had dropped upon leaving the

counting-house, to the effect that had any thing been wrong his presence would necessarily be indispensable, confirmed him in his notion. Now Mr. Livingstone was sufficiently well acquainted with Vernon's nature, to be aware that any favour conferred upon him, Vernon would hereafter gladly return in a tenfold proportion ; and he accordingly offered him the assignment of his wife's property—in the fullest hope, or rather in the best defined belief, that by such present sprat he should be able to catch some future salmon. Besides, he was well acquainted with Vernon's good opinion of him, which he had indeed taken some pains, at the period of his bankruptcy, to establish ; the offer of relinquishment of his wife's property upon that occasion, being merely a *ruse*, contrived by that lady and himself ; being convinced, as they both were, that it would not be accepted, or that even if it were, the trustees had received a previous caution not to give it up, which they had a perfectly legal right to do.

On the other hand, Vernon, although highly pleased by the apparent gratitude of Livingstone, was by no means insensible of the value of the money so handsomely tendered to him, particularly at this critical moment ; and if he did not with a proper degree of conscientiousness apply himself to the consideration of how it was to be repaid within a certain time, yet it must at least be urged in his favour, that he never contemplated the non-return.

The coach, in due time, stopped at a large, but somewhat dusky looking tenement, which appeared formerly to have been a mansion on Newington-green ; and the friends got out, Mr. Livingstone obsequiously leading the way through an “ o’er-weeded garden,” or fore court, which might have supplied groundsel and chickweed for all the birds in the neighbourhood.

“ If you will be so kind as to wait in this parlour for a few minutes,” said Livingstone, opening the door of a parlour, “ I will prepare Mrs. Livingstone to receive you. The poor

creature is so nervous and indisposed, that I fear the sudden appearance of an old and valued friend might prove too much for her weak spirits."

Vernon bowed, and took a seat, and, in point of fact, was not sorry for the opportunity afforded to himself of regaining his composure. He could not have believed till now, that the prospect of seeing the woman who had wronged and insulted him, and whom he thought he had long ago brought himself to regard with indifference, could have so moved and unnerved him. He did not then know, that no length of time will altogether efface impressions which are perhaps the stronger in proportion to the haste with which they have been received ; and that of all impressions, those of love, and first love, are the most powerful.

While he thus sat absorbed in his own reflections, a boy of about ten years of age stole unperceived into the apartment, and placed himself before him ; a seasonable cough, which

lads have always at command when they desire to attract attention, caused Vernon to open his eyes, and to direct them towards the child, who stood with all that ominous, overdone bashfulness, which betokens a speedy scrambling upon the visitor's knee, a derangement of his neckcloth, an attempted abstraction of his watch, and a digital scrutiny of his waistcoat pockets.

“And who are you, my fine little fellow?” said Vernon, patting the boy upon the head. “What's your name?”

“Oh! my name's Henry Livingstone, and papa sent me in here to make my bow, and to ask the gentleman how he did.”

Vernon was more surprised than pleased by this inroad. It is true he was aware that Livingstone had a large family, but he was not prepared for the sudden appearance of this representation of the juvenile *corps*. It was not so much the sight of the boy; but *such* a boy! The lad was in truth an ungainly little fellow enough; he had a round face, a snub

nose, large ears, and hair of a singular depth of colour, and of a colour which has not yet obtained extensive popularity, for it was red. His *tout-ensemble*, indeed, accorded but ill with a certain image of beauty which Vernon had the moment before been conjuring up.

At this instant, however, a rustling was heard in the passage, and Livingstone entered the room, leading forward his wife, who approached in a flutter of agitation, and placed her hand in that of the banker.

A few half-uttered words on all sides, and they were seated. Each felt a degree of awkwardness and constraint, which could not fail of being recognized by all. Mr. Livingstone whispered his eldest son to withdraw, which the boy effected in the usual ungracious manner of lads who expect "assurances of high consideration," from the visitor. Mrs. Livingstone selected the never-failing topic of the weather, and Vernon politely assented according to the rule in such cases made and pro-

vided. At length the entrance of a servant, who announced dinner, operated as a timely relief to the party, and Livingstone led the way to an opposite room, followed by Vernon and the lady.

The dinner passed off like all other dinners in one sense, for it came in course of time to an end; but it was by no means so lively and pleasant a dinner as might have been expected to be enjoyed by such "old friends." Livingstone indeed strove to interest his guest, by introducing topics of business, and thence deviating into political questions, the state of the nation, our foreign and domestic policy; but Vernon returned brief replies, and seemed hardly disposed to sift these various matters thoroughly at that moment; whilst Mrs. Livingstone was full of apologies for the plainness of the dinner. She was sure Mr. Vernon was so unused to that sort of thing; she was so sorry she had nothing better to offer him; it was very kind of him to drop in, in so friendly

a way—hoped the next time they should be better prepared, and the like; to all which, the banker made suitable replies, protesting that a plain dinner was his delight; that he was accustomed to it at home; that nothing could be better; that he would drop in oftener; and that he requested no preparation should be made for him; a large portion of all which statement it must be stated, was sheer hypocrisy on both sides, for Vernon was by no means averse to the good things of this life, and accordingly shuddered at what is called a plain dinner, and had resolved at the moment in his own mind, that Mrs. Livingstone should never see his face again.

Very shortly after the wine was placed upon the table, Mrs. Livingstone retired to the drawing-room, and left the two gentlemen together, who, lovers equally of the bottle, soon began to indemnify themselves, for their previous sufferings, by copious libations.

“Vernon,” said Livingstone, at the expira-

tion of the second bottle, "I keep no butler now, and must go myself for more wine. Had I not better take this opportunity of speaking to Mrs. Livingstone touching that little matter? Perhaps you would prefer that I should break the subject to her in private? We can afterwards talk it over together."

"Why I should, certainly," replied Vernon, "and I am sensible of the delicacy of the offer."

Livingstone gave a significant nod, and retired from the apartment, and having brought some more wine, and placed it on a convenient sideboard, walked up stairs to the drawing-room, where he found his lady leisurely sipping from a tumbler some brandy and water, to which she had, of late years, in a small way applied herself, it being deemed "good for her complaint." The following conversation took place between the exemplary couple:—

"When is he coming up?" enquired Mrs. Livingstone.

“ Oh, not yet, you may be sure of that,” replied the husband ; “ he likes the wine too well for that, depend upon it.”

“ But, Mr. Livingstone,” said the lady, “ you have not told me yet, what could induce you to bring the man here. You know I can’t bear strangers, and besides to be caught in such a pickle, and such a dinner to set before him ; it was wrong, Mr. Livingstone.”

“ Stuff !” said the husband ; “ he don’t mind that ; and, besides, he can be of service to us, and I have him in right cue just now, I can tell you.”

“ Indeed !—well, if that’s the case,” said Mrs. Livingstone, with a pleasing smile, as she concluded her brandy and water : “ of course we are glad to see him, Mr. Livingstone——”

“ Yes ; but we must do something for him,” said the husband ; “ we must confer an obligation on him first.”

“ I do not understand what you mean.”

“ Why, Mrs. Livingstone, ’tis a long story,

and you know nothing of business ; so I shan't tell you much about it. He would be glad of a few thousands for a month or two ; and I have promised him that you will consent to assign your settlement to him for that time."

" Good God ! Livingstone, how mad you must be to do any thing of the kind ! The only thing we have to depend upon ! What's to become of the children—the children, sir ? I dare say ! I am not going to do any thing of the kind ;—not I, Mr. Livingstone."

" You are talking like a fool, as usual," said Livingstone ; " do you think I would let him have the money, if I didn't know it was safe as the Bank ? What's to become of the children ? Why I'll get him to find places for them, you may take my word for that. Here's Henry, nearly old enough for a good birth, and the others will follow in due succession."

" Well, but do you think it *quite* safe in his hands ?" remonstrated Mrs. Livingstone, with as much earnestness as she dared to assume before her husband.

“ Pshaw !—safe !” said the other tauntingly; “ and I’ll tell you what, madam,—it would be well that you should be as civil and polite to Vernon as possible; compliment him—flatter him;—you know his weak points;—and when I bring him up stairs, have the letter ready, authorizing the trustees to transfer the stock to him—do you hear? But I must return—he’ll wonder what detains me so long.” So saying, Mr. Livingstone closed the door, and returned to his friend.

“ Well,” said he, as he decanted another bottle of wine, and pushed it towards Vernon, “ I have arranged every thing with Mrs. Livingstone. You do not know the pleasure she feels in being able to do you this trifling service; but, as I told you before, you are no small favourite in that quarter.”

Vernon made all proper acknowledgments, and the two friends insensibly slid into more unrestrained and familiar conversation.

“ By the bye,” said the banker at length,

“ is it not time that we should join Mrs. Livingstone? I must be early in town, and it is now nine o'clock.”

Livingstone, as the bottle was out, readily acquiesced, and the two gentlemen found their way up stairs into the presence of the lady, with faces not flushed beyond the decent after-dinner standard.

“ My love,” said Mr. Livingstone, as he took an offered cup of coffee, “ our friend Vernon has, as I have told you, consented to do us the favour of permitting us to be of trifling service to him for a few months.”

“ Oh, I am *so* happy !—indeed, Mr. Vernon,” replied the lady, turning towards him with a fascinating smile, “ there is nothing—nothing in the world that Mr. Vernon could ask, which we should not feel ourselves under an obligation to accede to.” And so saying, with a profound curtsy, she gave him a folded letter addressed to two gentlemen in the city, whom the banker perfectly well knew.

“My dear madam,” said Vernon, as having rapidly cast his eye over the contents of the letter, he placed it in his pocket-book, “be assured I feel a proper sense of the obligation you have now conferred upon me. Not so much, permit me to say, in respect of the amount consigned to me, which, I assure you, may or may not be of service to me at this moment; but because it indicates a friendship, and a recollection of former intimacy on your part, which must ever continue to be a pleasing portion of my existence.”

“Oh, do not say so!” sighed Mrs. Livingstone.

Vernon himself began to think, at the moment, that he might as well have held his peace about the past. “But,” he added, “if it should ever be in my power to return the favour—and I think I may say it will be—I must particularly request you will command me.”

“Not a word about that,” said Livingstone; “we are both well assured of that.”

“We are certain of that,” chimed Mrs. Livingstone ; and another sigh escaped her.

At this moment Mr. Livingstone abruptly quitted the apartment.

There was an unsatisfactory silence of some minutes, which Vernon did not exactly know how to break, but the lady relieved him.

“There have been great changes since we last had the pleasure of meeting.”

“Many indeed,” said Vernon.

“And with very few of us for the better,” said Mrs. Livingstone, with mournful earnestness.

“Indeed ! I have been sorry—much concerned—to hear of your misfortunes,” said Vernon with sympathy ; and another pause ensued.

Had Vernon been merely a casual acquaintance of twelve years ago, he would not, as he gazed on her, have recognised in Mrs. Livingstone the Miss Marshall—the beautiful girl—of former days. She was, indeed, so much al-

tered, that very few traces remained of her earlier loveliness; only that one undefinable expression which had originally captivated Vernon, and which, to the eye of a lover, no change can destroy.

“I hope you have at least been happy,” said Vernon, with tenderness. “Fortune cannot altogether deprive us of happiness, although she may deny wealth.”

“Alas! no,” replied Mrs. Livingstone, and she shed tears. “Oh, how little are young girls competent to judge of those, in whose hands they confide their happiness.”

“My dear Mrs. Livingstone, I am shocked beyond measure to see you thus affected,” said Vernon, softly. “Pray be composed.”

“I will strive to be so,” sighed Mrs. Livingstone. “Oh, Horace, it might have been otherwise!”

Vernon spoke not for some minutes. “It *might*, indeed, have been otherwise,” he said at

length, and he arose and walked towards the door.

“Oh, pardon my absence, it was quite unavoidable, I assure you,” said Livingstone, entering the room as Vernon opened the door.

Vernon did not observe the look of malignant rage with which Mrs. Livingstone greeted her husband, who was also spared that pleasure.

“Nay, I must really go,” said Vernon, as Livingstone made some officious attempts to detain him. “I bargained to be permitted to retire early this evening; when I repeat my visit—”

“You shall stay longer with us,” said Livingstone.

“But must you really leave us?” said the lady, with a pleading pressure of the hand.

“My dear, he must,” said Livingstone, somewhat sharply. “Wait, I’ll get a light; why is the lamp not lighted in the hall? Where’s Mary?” and Livingstone hurried from the room.

“ Good night, Horace,” said Mrs. Livingstone, and she looked up into his face with the eyes of earlier days. “ You *will* come again soon—will you ?”

“ I will,” said Vernon. “ God bless you, Emily !”

“ And you, Horace ! and you !” she added, and she drew him towards her.

Vernon almost broke away ; and encountering Livingstone in the passage, bade him a hasty good night, shook hands, and hurried into the road.

As he rode back to the city, Vernon’s heart almost smote him for the apparent coldness of his manner when he took leave of Mrs. Livingstone. He could plainly see that the woman still loved him, and he feared that she was harshly treated by Livingstone ; and the memory of former years oppressed him with a feeling of pity, of compassion, of something deeper, perhaps, which he had not thought ever again in this world to experience.

It was too late to return to Egham that night, and, as he paid the coachman his fare, the weight of gold in his purse reminded him of a chance in another quarter. Vernon was a man, as we have shown, of excitable temperament, and incapable of resisting his passions. He got into a hackney-coach, therefore, and was driven to No. —, St. James's-street.

CHAPTER VIII.

“My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And ev’ry tongue brings in a several tale,
And ev’ry tale condemns me.”

VERNON arose in unaccustomed high spirits on the following morning, and having dispatched a hasty breakfast in the coffee-room, made the best of his way to the office of Mr. Robinson.

He found that gentleman actively engaged, as usual, in his professional avocations. There was, however, a rather decent-looking man in the office, who seemed waiting, hat in hand, for an opportunity of further conversation with the solicitor.

As soon as Mr. Robinson beheld his patron,

which, so absorbed had he been in the business before him, it was some minutes before he had leisure to do, he started to his feet with obsequious rapidity.

“God bless my soul, Mr. Vernon ! how remiss ! how negligent ! I really beg your pardon !” and he turned towards the stranger—
“Mr. Jeffries, I wish you would be so good as to call again this afternoon ; I have most particular business with this gentleman. Will you excuse me for the present ?”

“Oh, certainly,” said Jack Jeffries ; “I will look in again at four o’clock ;” and he was about to take his leave.

“I think I have had the pleasure of seeing you before,” said Vernon, addressing Jeffries ; although I quite forget the occasion of our meeting.”

Mr. Robinson’s visage assumed an expression of interest not altogether unmingled with anxiety.

“I once had the honour of waiting upon

you," replied Jeffries, " in the case of Mr. Ratcliffe, formerly a clerk of yours—"

" Oh, I remember," said Vernon; " and pray what is become of my poor friend Ratcliffe?"

" Why, sir," said Jeffries, assuming a professional air, " we had a great deal of trouble with Mr. Ratcliffe. I took an interest in him, sir,—a private interest, apart from the accident of his being my client; and myself and certain other friends of the poor man,—he was a worthy man, sir.—obtained him a situation in Nova Scotia, where, I think I may say, he is getting on very well, at this present moment."

" I am very glad to hear it," said the banker; and Mr. Jeffries, making a polite bow to Vernon, and his former master, gracefully arranged his hat on one side of his head, passed his fingers through his hair on the other, turned on his heel, and went his way to the Crown and Cushion, where his friend Hunsman, with a well-filled pipe, and a pot of ale was awaiting him.

“A clever young man that—a very clever young man,” said Robinson; “formerly a clerk of mine, Mr. Vernon. But young men will be ambitious. He didn’t know when he was well off—made a mistake—had no connexion—and now wants to return to his old master——”

“Indeed!” said Vernon, paying but little attention to this narrative.

“Yes, sir,—yes,” said Robinson, with an important air; “I am too indulgent, I fear—too tender-hearted for my profession. The world requires us to be stones, flints, and rock; but I can’t—I can’t. Could I see the man starve before my eyes—under my very nose, I may say, with a wife about to become a mother for the ninth time; with no prospect before them but the workhouse?—five ounces of bread, and one ounce of cheese, for adults—God knows what for the infants,—husband and wife literally torn asunder,—disgraceful badge stuck here—just here—where the heart ought to be. Ugh!—I can’t bear the thought of it—I *must* take him back again——”

“ These sentiments do you honour,” said Vernon, addressing the back of Robinson’s head, who, with averted face, and in a state of much agitation, was writhing about in his chair; “ and if the young man is, as you say, clever, and worthy also——”

“ Oh—worthy!—worthy!” cried Robinson, looking up over his shoulder; “ as worthy a creature as ever put pen to parchment; and I could wish that he had never left me; but it is not in my nature to injure any human being, or I could have ruined him—I could have destroyed him, sir—in his profession——”

“ Well, but touching business, Robinson,” said Vernon, somewhat impatiently: “ I am in great haste this morning: I have a great deal to attend to. Have you done any thing with Hopwood?”

“ God bless my soul! do forgive me, I beg of you!” cried Robinson. “ My feelings hurried me away. I had, I am ashamed to say, forgotten every thing at the moment but that

poor man. Well, sir,"—and he assumed an expression of serene pleasure;—"we have managed that little matter. I found Mr. Hopwood, as, indeed, I have ever found him, the perfect gentleman. He was too happy to oblige Mr. Vernon. See here, sir, I have a cheque for the amount, less the discount;" and he presented it to the banker gracefully.

"Well, Robinson, I am very glad you have done it," said Vernon; "and I am much obliged, I assure you, for your exertions. You will be pleased to debit my account with the same amount that Mr. Hopwood has done the bills at. Nay, not a word,—it shall be so. I perceive he has charged three-and-a-half per cent.,—it is quite fair. I owe you £262 10s., which you can have whenever you please."

"Mr. Vernon,—Mr. Vernon," said Robinson, with watery eyes, "you will overwhelm me with kindness; you will, indeed, sir. You are too generous—too noble. How shall I ever repay your bounty? When shall I deserve it? Never."

Had Vernon been intimately acquainted with the internal moral arrangement of Mr. Robinson, he might probably have been of the same opinion. As it was, however, he soothed the excited philanthropist by assurances of his perfect friendship and esteem, and expressions of his conviction, that Mr. Robinson deserved much more than fortune had yet done for him ; and taking his hat, he was about to depart.

“ By the bye, Robinson,” said he, as he put on his gloves, “ do you think you could find me a purchaser for my box at Egham? I think of parting with it after this summer. I mean to live more in London for the future. Indeed, I don’t altogether like that neighbourhood ; and I have had an offer of a much sweeter place in Kent, near Tunbridge-Wells. Is it in your way? Do you think you could find me a purchaser for it?”

“ Why, any thing is in my way, and this amongst the rest,” returned the solicitor ; “ and I have no doubt I can easily get somebody to

take it off your hands. But I wonder you should wish to part with it—so delightful a retreat, after the fatigues of business. But, stop!—Well, that is most extraordinary! I called at your house, sir, after I had completed my business with Mr. Hopwood, yesterday, in the expectation and hope of seeing you; but the ladies told me you had been summoned suddenly to town; and there I had the pleasure of seeing Captain Laurence. I think I may venture to call him your future brother-in-law. Charming young lady, Miss Charlotte, certainly!”

“ Well,” said Vernon coldly, “ and what of Captain Laurence?”

“ Oh, we had a long ramble in your delightful garden; and we were talking about the place: we both thought it a perfect little paradise: and the Captain was saying, if you should ever think of parting with it, how happy should he be to become the proprietor.”

“ Aye, indeed!” said Vernon, surprised,—a

sudden recollection of the Captain's regiment being ordered abroad, flashing through his memory.

“ Yes, he did, indeed,” said Robinson ; but at that moment a thought equally unpleasant shot through the brain of the solicitor,—that thought being, that if Captain Laurence really did purchase the perfect little paradise, he (Mr. Robinson) would lose the commission he expected to obtain upon the sale of it. Inwardly cursing, therefore, his officious communicativeness, he hastened to quash any impression his words might have created, and added, “ but I dare say the Captain spoke without really intending any thing. He would have mentioned it to you if he had, when you have spoken, as I dare say you have, of parting with it.”

“ Very likely,” said Vernon ; “ but we will talk of this another time—I am in a hurry now ; good morning.”

Vernon had left the room, and was making his way through the clerk's office, when Mr.

Robinson ran after him and seized him by the sleeve.

“What a head I have,” said he; “I can remember nothing, now-a-days! will you be so kind as to step back with me for one moment only?”

The banker obeyed; but perhaps not with the best grace in the world.

“I have a message to deliver to you,” said the solicitor, “which I declare had slipped my memory—a message from a lady”—he added with a leer intended to be jocose.

“A lady, Mr. Robinson; whom do you mean?”

“A lady,” said the other, with a very serious countenance; “who takes your recent unkindness to her very much to heart; a lady who is very much to be pitied.—I am sure I sympathize with her from my very soul!”

“You mean Mrs. Maxwell, probably,” said Vernon.

“I do, sir; I was passing her door yesterday

on my return to town, when she beckoned to me from the window, and conjured me, if I valued her peace of mind, to acquaint you that she wished most particularly to see you, if only for a few minutes, and on business of importance. I promised to do so; and yet, as you see, I had almost omitted to mention it—a fault of the head, not of the heart, sir—for I protest I have a great respect for Mrs. Maxwell. But I have so many things to attend to—”

“ Did Mrs. Maxwell inform you of the business on which she wished to see me?” inquired Vernon.

“ She did, professionally,” said Robinson, “ but she requested me not to mention it to you; she would wish to pour it into your own ear. I may, however, state that you have it in your power to do her a most essential, a most incalculable service at this juncture.”

“ I will see her once more !” said Vernon, half speaking to himself.

“ Do you promise that you will see her?”

said Mr. Robinson, who had heard the previous part of the sentence; “one word—your word is sufficient—may she hope to see you?”

“I will see her this evening, Robinson,” said the banker. “Once more, good morning.”

“Good morning; God bless you!” said Robinson, with emotion; “there is no one who deserves it more.”

“Who requires it more, rather”—thought Vernon as he left the house, a host of oppressive thoughts weighing upon his heart—“yes, I will see her once more, and it *shall* be for the last time.”

Getting into a hackney-coach he soon found himself at the office of Smither and Raven, the respectable stock-brokers of Throgmorton-street, and the trustees of Mrs. Livingstone’s property. The former gentleman was within, and, on the appearance of Vernon, rose from his seat with an expression of surprise, with which was mingled no small degree of pleasure.

Having read Mrs. Livingstone’s note, which

he did with some deliberation, it might have been observable, by a bystander, had there been one, that the surprise upon the countenance of the worthy man increased rapidly, whilst the pleasure seemed receding with at least equal velocity.

“ Oh, certainly, it shall be attended to,” said Mr. Smithers; “ there can be no objection, I should think—none on my part, I’m sure. I’ll just speak to my partner though—we must do these things in a business-like manner. Do you require it at this moment, Mr. Vernon ?”

“ Well,” said the banker with an indifferent air; “ it might be as well that I should have it directly; for I have a destination for it, which I have explained to Mrs. Livingstone, which may possibly be of the utmost advantage to her interest; and the turn of the market just now is favourable.

“ Excuse me for one moment, if you please,” said Mr. Smithers, and he walked into the front counting-house.

“I see, sir,” said he, returning almost immediately ; for having heard of the run upon the banking-house the day before, he was naturally solicitous to know how affairs proceeded this morning ; and accordingly on the instant that Vernon entered, had privately dispatched a clerk to ascertain how things went on. “I see, sir,” he continued, “you are anxious to be of service to Mrs. Livingstone in the disposal of her property for a time, to purposes which your many opportunities enable you to assure yourself will be profitable to her.”

“Just so,” said Vernon ; “Livingstone is a very old friend of mine, and I have a great respect for Mrs. Livingstone also, whom I have likewise known for some years.”

“Well, then, Mr. Vernon, suppose I give you a cheque for the amount at once, and hold this lady’s letter as my voucher,” said Mr. Smithers, promptly ; “your endorsement of the cheque will be sufficient. Shall it be so?”

“That will be just the thing,” returned the

banker ; “ and I shall take care to apprise Mrs. Livingstone of the promptness with which you have complied with her wishes.”

“ Oh, my dear sir, pray do not mention it,” said the stockbroker, writing out a cheque for the amount, and handing it to Vernon. “ I hope, sir, that your speculation will be a profitable one for the lady, and that I shall see this money returned in a short time with something to it—eh, sir ?”

“ No doubt of it,” said Vernon, taking the cheque ; “ I very seldom fail in my speculations, for others at all events : whatever be the result, her capital at least is certain.”

“ Who dares doubt that ?” said Mr. Smithers, with flattering emphasis. “ By the way, Mr. Vernon, will you permit me to ask you a particular favour ?”

“ Certainly, I shall be most happy, if I have it in my power to grant it.”

“ I have a nephew, sir,” said Mr. Smithers ; “ a very fine young man, just come to London

from the north—the son of an unfortunate sister of mine. He wants a situation; I think, in your house, he would be likely to prove an acquisition.”

“It shall be done,” said Vernon; “I will make a note of it, and depend upon it I will send for him on the first vacancy.”

“You are too kind, sir,” said Smithers; “and I am sure if I should be, at any future time, in a situation to return—”

“Thank you, thank you,” said the banker, cutting short his oratory, and with many bows on the part of the stock-broker, Vernon withdrew.

On his entrance into the private office of the banking-house, Vernon found Mr. Warkworth seated at his table, with a much more serene countenance and manner than he had expected to find in that gentleman.

“Here,” said Vernon, handing him the two cheques, “here is something towards making good my word. You will find a trifle less than £40,000.”

Mr. Warkworth received them with greater indifference than Vernon was prepared to look for from his partner. He took them into the shop, and committed them to one of the clerks.

“It is something, certainly,” said he, resuming his seat; “but I fancy now it will hardly be required. The panic is abated; indeed, it began to subside shortly after you left me yesterday. It were, indeed, a strange circumstance, if the house of Warkworth and Co. could be for any length of time suspected, Mr. Vernon.”

Vernon started. There was something unusual in the tone of Mr. Warkworth that grated harshly upon his ear.

“You speak, sir,” said Vernon, with some asperity, “of the house of Warkworth and Co. The firm used to be, in my father’s time, Vernon, Warkworth, and Vernon; and for my own part, I cannot remember when the name of Vernon was omitted. Certainly at no period when the name of Warkworth was known.”

“That is all very true, sir,” said Warkworth, coolly, “and I had a great respect for your father—a very great respect—but I must tell you, Mr. Vernon, that since you left the house yesterday, I have conferred with several gentlemen of the highest respectability; and they advise me that, unless matters take a very material change, the name of Vernon should no longer continue in the firm.”

“And you dare tell me this?” said Vernon, rising, and approaching the old gentleman:—
“with whom have you been conferring, and about what? My name shall no longer continue in the firm! We are partners, Mr. Warkworth, and it requires some more special circumstances than ‘a conference with several gentlemen,’ however highly respectable, to make me otherwise.”

“Pray, my dear sir, be calm, and sit down, I implore you,” cried Warkworth, alarmed; “what need of this agitation—this excitement? I was too hasty in saying that these gentlemen

advised such an extreme measure ; but really, Vernon, when I see how the bank has been conducted lately, I am naturally astonished and grieved—I may say frightened ; I repeat sir, that the lengths to which you have gone, have positively paralised me.”

“ What do you mean ? I do not understand you,” said Vernon.

“ Why, my dear sir,” said Warkworth, soothingly, “ how can you suppose, that to a house like ours, of such resources, of such extensive business, a paltry sum like £40,000 could be of more than momentary importance ?”

“ And yet you thought so yesterday,” said Vernon.

“ Pardon me, I did not,” said his partner ; “ I was, in truth, much unnerved by the sudden distrust on the part of the mercantile world, of our old and respectable house ; and I must confess, I was shocked to perceive that you had, within the last few days, drawn so large a sum from our immediately available

assets. But that was not the sole cause of my agitation,—I had other reasons.”

“And pray, may I be bold enough to inquire those other reasons?” said Vernon with a sneer.

“Since you ask me, I will tell you,” said Warkworth; “what is become of that large sum of money intrusted to us by Sewell, of Carlisle? You had a power of attorney to receive it from the bank, Mr. Vernon; now, sir, I think a sum of £200,000 unaccounted for, is something to be anxious about.”

Vernon turned suddenly very pale, and did not answer for some moments. “I had a power of attorney to receive it,” he said at length, “and you must remember, that he is my friend, and not your’s; I was the means of bringing him to our house.”

“And the house is answerable for it,” returned Warkworth, “and I have therefore a right to demand how it has been disposed of; you cannot, surely, refuse to satisfy me upon this point.”

“We will talk of it to-morrow,” said Vernon, suddenly rising; “I think I shall be able to satisfy you that it has been disposed of to the best advantage.”

“Well, sir, I hope you may,” said Warkworth distantly.

“In the meanwhile, I am glad,” said Vernon, turning away, “that the unpleasantness of yesterday, is not again likely to occur.”

“I have taken care of that,” said his partner, “the bank will assist us to any amount.”

“Their good feeling towards us, you must be aware, Mr. Warkworth, is entirely owing to me.”

“I admit it cheerfully,” said Warkworth.

“I shall not be required, I suppose, to-day?”

“No, we can do very well without you—I shall see you to-morrow, I hope.”

“Certainly, certainly;” and Vernon was about to depart, when Warkworth caught him by the hand.

“Forgive me, for what I have said,” said the old man, earnestly; “I know it would be better to have an explanation at once, and that it must be done at last; I hope we shall go on better for the future; you know I am fully sensible of your value to the firm; I hope you believe so.”

Vernon’s eyes filled with tears, as he wrung his partner’s hand between his own; “I know it, I know it,” said he, in a stifled voice; “and I hope we shall go on better than before, it shall not be my fault if we do not; forgive me for the present; I am ill, and unfit to talk about business.”

“Your recent loss, I fear, has too much affected you,” said Warkworth kindly.

“It may be so; good bye,” and Vernon hastened into the street.

As Vernon rode towards home, certain reflections, to which he had been too long a stranger, obtruded themselves into his mind. He awoke, as it were, from a prolonged and

fearful dream ; and the reality that presented itself to him was no less appalling. He felt that Warkworth had too much ground for a suspicion which, if verified, might go far to destroy his character, and ruin his future prospects ; but how to avert it ? or rather how to dissipate it ? That was a question which he could by no means resolve. As his baffled thoughts retreated from this hideous contemplation, his mind was insensibly led to the remembrance of minor, but no less degrading circumstances. How could he justify to himself the duplicity of which he had been guilty to Livingstone and his wife ? and, having succeeded in his object, how should he be able to return the sum of which he had so unjustly possessed himself ? Again, the bills he had contrived to get discounted by Mr. Hopwood, through the agency of Robinson,—what chance was there, at present, of being able to meet them, seeing that he had now well nigh exhausted all his resources ? He shuddered

when he reflected upon the possibility of compromising the reputation of so worthy a creature as Robinson. But there was one comfort, the bills had three months to run ; much might be done before that period ; there was time to turn himself round ; and he would, he was determined upon that—he would do something.

In spite, however, of these consolatory expedients, to which men, in cases of moral emergency are too prone to apply themselves, and to which Vernon was more apt than most men to resort ; it may be easily imagined that he found himself ill at ease and dissatisfied, after all, and by no means in the best temper for entering on the particular business upon which, he now suddenly recollected, Mrs. Maxwell wished to see him.

He halted once, and debated with himself, whether he should call upon her at all ; but, with that waywardness which induced him upon almost every occasion, to reject his second thoughts, because they did not happen to be

his first, and thinking that, all circumstances considered, he had better go through this interview at once, he stopped before the gate, and committing his horse to the care of a servant, entered the house.

He had some short time to wait before Mrs. Maxwell could be seen, and during the lapse of these few minutes, he was rather surprised to hear certain sounds of vociferous mirth, and boisterous talk, proceeding from the lower apartments. Before, however, he could even conjecture the cause of such unusual proceedings, Mrs. Maxwell made her appearance in a state of considerable disorder of dress and manner, and seizing one of Vernon's hands passionately with her own, leaned her head upon his shoulder, and began to weep bitterly.

Vernon was astonished and shocked at this exhibition of woe, but remained silent.

"Oh, my dear Horace," sobbed Mrs. Maxwell, "how unkind it was of you to stay away for so long a time; do you think I could have

acted so barbarously to you? Oh! you know I could not."

"My dear creature," said Vernon, moved, "you distress me; you do indeed, by this violence of grief; for Heaven's sake, compose yourself."

"Could I have believed *you* could be so cruel, Horace!" said Mrs. Maxwell, raising her streaming eyes to those of her friend.

Vernon, like the generality of mankind, could not bear to see a woman in tears; and yet he did not exactly know, what species of consolation would be, at that moment, most likely to be effectual.

"I heard of your recent calamity," continued Mrs. Maxwell, as Vernon led her to a seat, "and I deeply sympathized with you. The loss of a mother—and such a mother; "oh! it must, indeed, have been an insupportable affliction to you; but, I think, had you called upon me, I might have condoled with you; I might have afforded some consolation to you;

I am not without feeling, Horace Vernon—I almost wish that I were.”

“Nay, say not so,” cried Vernon; “I know your heart; but let us change the subject—it is painful to me. Let me know the business you wished to see me upon.”

“I fear I can hardly mention it to you,” said Mrs. Maxwell, looking down, and with a hesitation of voice appropriate to the occasion; “I know you will say it was very imprudent of me to suffer myself to be placed in such a predicament: it is disgraceful; I feel it is. Oh, I cannot tell you, Vernon—I cannot tell you!”

“My dear Eliza,” cried Vernon, “I insist upon knowing the cause of your anxiety; how, otherwise, am I to offer you any assistance?—What is the matter?”

“Then you *will* assist me?” exclaimed Mrs. Maxwell, suddenly looking up, and clasping her hands, which she held before her bosom in an attitude of supplication. “Good, kind, generous Vernon!”

“What is the matter?” repeated Vernon, with some anxiety.

“I am almost ashamed to tell you,” said the lady; and she again hesitated for a moment, and attempted a blush, which was not altogether abortive. “I have, Vernon,—I have, at this moment, an execution in my house, for £2,000.”

“Good God! Eliza, did not you solemnly promise me, that this should never occur again?”

“I did, certainly;” and Mrs. Maxwell again fixed her eyes upon the carpet. “I feel I have been very imprudent; but this *shall* be for the last time, I do assure you——”

At this moment the door opened, and a young lady was about to enter the room; but, perceiving a gentleman, stood irresolute, and doubtful whether she should retire.

“Leave the room, Miss Graham, instantly, I beg of you,” said Mrs. Maxwell, in a sharp voice, which accorded but ill with the dulcet

tones with which she was accustomed to soothe the ear of Vernon. The young lady, with a timid look and a humble curtsy, withdrew.

“Miss Agnes—is it not?” said Vernon, turning to Mrs. Maxwell.

“It is; and you would scarcely believe the trouble I have had with that obstinate and refractory girl. But,”—and Mrs. Maxwell resumed her accustomed softness of speech;—“but, my dear Horace, pray do get me out of this scrape; do relieve me from those odious men below: but I know you will; you said you would assist me: now, my dear, good creature, set about it at once, will you?”

“Eliza,” said Vernon, gravely, “I would even do this for you, although, I fear, I have gone too far already to serve you; but, I cannot—I cannot.” A strange revulsion of feeling had taken place in the banker’s mind, since Miss Agnes Graham entered the room.

“How, my dear Vernon—you *cannot*?” said Mrs. Maxwell, arching her eyebrows incredulously; “you are joking, sure!”

“Indeed, madam, I am not,” said Vernon ; and he took his hat. “I will see Robinson about it, certainly, and see whether he can serve you—I cannot.”

“This is cruel of you, Vernon—indeed it is,” said Mrs. Maxwell ; and she burst into a passion of tears.

“I am sorry you think so,” said Vernon ; and he moved towards the door. “I will see you to-morrow, and let you know what Robinson says.” He was already at the door, nor did Mrs. Maxwell attempt to stay him. She knew his nature too well.

“Horace, one word with you before you go,” she said softly ; and he turned towards her.

“I know, my dear Horace, you would serve me if you could : you have said you cannot, and I believe you. Your word was ever sufficient. But do not desert me : let me see you again—to-morrow, did you say ? Oh ! come to-morrow : let not such trifles as these part us—part *us*, Horace, who have once so truly loved.”

And a fresh supply of tears interrupted her further speech.

“God bless you, Eliza!” said Vernon, affected; “I will see you to-morrow—on my honour, I will.”

Vernon returned to his own house, allaying, by his presence, the anxiety which his sisters had felt, in consequence of his keeping from home during the night; but giving occasion for more painful solicitude, by the reserve and gravity of his manner during the remainder of that day.

CHAPTER IX.

“I took him for the plainest, harmless’t creature,
That breath’d upon the earth—a Christian.”

WITH the English “man of business,” the eager desire of rank or exclusive distinction, appears to follow, as a matter of course, the successful pursuit of wealth. Our friend Hopwood, it must be seen, was rather a prominent specimen of this class of aspirants to aristocratic dignity: he had originally acquired a large fortune by successful trade, which he had since doubled by money transactions; for after his retirement from business, his wealth was continually and advantageously employed.

He had a valuable estate in the country,

which came into his possession by the foreclosure of a mortgage ; and, in fact, most of his real property he had acquired by shrewd “dabbling” in money matters. He was a capitalist who could be always referred to by attorneys, money agents, *et hoc genus omne*, when “good security” could be offered ; and in this manner he had amassed a property, which, when he estimated it to Lord Walgrave at £200,000, exclusive of his daughter’s marriage portion, he must have rather underrated than otherwise. Had Hopwood been blessed with a son, the hopes of the family would, of course, have centred in him ; the army, the law, perhaps parliament, might have rendered the name illustrious ; whilst, to back the growing honours of the family, he would himself have retired to a country estate, obtained a commission of the peace, been one of the quorum, have fixed himself in the county, and eventually, have earned a page in “Burke’s History of the Landed Gentry.”

The daughter would not have married below the rank of an "Officer in the Guards," and thus would the humble family of the jeweller been merged in the mass of the aristocracy.

But, not being blessed with an heir—that proud hope with a fond and wealthy father, Hopwood's chances of greatness were for a long time centred in his own exertions ; his first interview with Lord Walgrave strengthened his hopes ; but the visit of his lordship distinctly pointed out the road to aggrandizement :—his daughter had now become the pivot on which his eager anticipations turned.

In making the liberal offer he did to Lord Walgrave, Hopwood was not so blinded by his prospects as not to understand all the points of the contract in their true business-like bearing ; indeed, he would have had no hesitation in offering Lord Walgrave even greater advantages by his marriage with his daughter ; for he knew by experience, the reckless habits of expenditure amongst certain people of fashion,

and he felt quite sure that he should have the management of whatever property Lord Walgrave possessed, or was ever likely to possess ; so that under his guardianship it was in no danger of dilapidation. If he could, therefore, tempt his lordship by a splendid bait, he knew that he could do so securely, and more especially, Lord Walgrave being no longer what is called a young man, that, his affairs being once arranged, and he in the clear possession of a handsome income, there was every ground for expectation that he would quit his hitherto notoriously irregular mode of life, for a more prudent and respectable course.

It was with thoughts such as these, glancing rapidly over his mind, that Mr. Hopwood sought the interior of his house. He had caught the last glimpse of Lord Walgrave's cabriolet, and had heard the last and faintest sound of its wheels, as it bore its noble owner from his dwelling, before he could resolve to leave the place where he had parted with him.

His feelings had undergone a sensible change in a very short period ; he no longer considered himself the obscure individual he had hitherto been, and his step was firmer, and his head more erect, as he returned to his parlour. His manner, it is true, had frequently before varied ; and, as his chance of distinction had been more or less favourable, he had conducted himself with more or less familiarity to his neighbours and associates. But now that he saw himself with every probability of being allied to nobility, and that of a high rank, the first idea that crossed his mind, in his new and elevated position, was the practicability, and indeed the propriety, of cutting the whole of his former acquaintance.

“ My love,” he said to Georgina, with a voice and air of solemnity, as she resumed the work which the arrival of Lord Walgrave had interrupted, “ you have the good fortune to possess parents who, from your earliest infancy, have devoted themselves to you—to your edu-

cation, your accomplishments, and above all, to the proper inculcation of your moral and religious duties."

Here the old gentleman paused, and looked at his wife, who on her part observed a silent but most emphatic approval.

"The progress you have made in your studies, the simplicity of your character, and the total absence of art in all your proceedings, are so many proofs of the excellence of the system I have adopted for you, and will be a guide to you in after life, to bring up your own"—(a severe sign from the maternal branch, warned Hopwood that he was venturing upon ticklish ground)—that is to say, my love"—he stammered—"that is to say, that it may regulate your own actions, when your parents will cease to exercise controul over you."

Hopwood looked inquiringly at his wife at this point, as if he thought he had escaped from the dilemma with good address. Mrs. Hopwood nodded her satisfaction: Georgina listened

to the paternal harangue with great deference, wondering what could possibly be coming.

“I have said thus much, my love,” continued the head of the family,” because I have reason to believe, from recent circumstances, that my hopes and expectations in your favour are not likely to be disappointed—that the education and care I have bestowed on you will qualify and render you worthy the”—the—high, he would have said, but checked himself, as if he thought he was proceeding too far ; but a telegraphic appeal to his wife reassured him ; “Yes, I believe I may say the—high station you will occupy in society. Yes, my love,” he continued, warming with the magnificence of his own ideas—“henceforth you may indulge hopes the most—the most, vast ;—yes, my love, I may say—vast ; and you must frame your mind and your conduct accordingly.”

“But, papa, what am I to hope ?” naturally inquired Georgina, though with a timid air : “what am I to expect so vast ?”

“Be patient, my love,” answered Mrs. Hopwood; “you will know all in time.”

“What I would particularly impress upon you, my love,” continued Hopwood, “is to be careful not to form acquaintances, such as may be unpleasant to acknowledge when you are—that is—in any other situation of life.”

“But, papa, I know nobody, but the few neighbours who come to see you,” said Georgina; “except indeed Agnes.”

“Ah! there I think you had better be cautious, my dear,” remarked the old gentleman; “I do not exactly understand the proceedings of Beverly-house. Miss Graham is a nice young person; but she is left much to herself; she is liable to form improper connexions; in fact, Georgina, her prospects in life are very different from yours, and I could wish that you were a little less intimate. I have my reasons for it, my love.”

Mr. Hopwood again glanced at the barometer of his wife’s countenance, to observe

whether it rose or fell at the progress of his lecture, and was gratified at finding it “set fair.”

“Your papa is perfectly right, my dear,” observed Mrs. Hopwood; “he has his reason;” and here the good lady glanced significantly at her husband, and then added, with an almost imperceptible movement of her head in a certain direction, conveying to him her recollection of his confidential communication to her respecting the scene at the garden-gate, described at an earlier part of this history—“your papa has his reasons.”

Georgina looked very blank at this intimation from her parents of the propriety of cutting her friend Agnes; but her observations on it, if she intended any, were interrupted by the arrival of Major Caisson.

“How d’ye do? how d’ye do?” said the good-hearted veteran, who seemed to regret that he had not three hands to give, one to each; “I can’t stay a minute; I only called

to ask you all to my house this evening. We have a little party. But what's the matter? anything amiss?" for the old major observed what he thought a little reserve in the manner of the head of the family.

"No, major, no," said Mr. Hopwood; "we are much as usual. But my friend, Lord Walgrave, has just left us; he has been consulting me on some interesting topics—I may say very interesting topics."

"Oh, yes, I understand," said the major, slyly, and touching his pocket significantly.

"O dear, no, major," said Hopwood with offended dignity; "nothing of the sort, I assure you; it was on family matters we consulted—entirely on private and family matters, nothing more."

"O, I beg your pardon; you know, of course, that his father has cut him some years since," said the major in an indifferent tone.

"I knew no such thing," said Hopwood, pettishly; "a trifling family disagreement, I

believe, has occurred, but which will be shortly put to rights."

"Ah, well, I don't know much about him; neither do I wish to know," returned the major, in the careless tone of one who does not take much interest in his subject; only take care of him, that's all—a good-hearted sort of fellow enough, I believe—but a bit of a scamp."

"Lord Walgrave, sir, is a nobleman of the strictest honour; and as I said, is an intimate—I may say, a *very* intimate friend of our family," returned Mr. Hopwood, looking furiously at the ceiling, one hand being thrust into the breast of his waistcoat, and the fingers of the other beating a tattoo upon the arm of his chair.

"Oh! I beg your pardon," said the old major, with a good-humoured waggish expression lurking in his countenance; "I thought your visiting was merely a business-sort of visiting, that's all. Whether he is a scamp or not, does not matter to me, more than the one-eighth of an inch in my brass howitzer. Cla-

rencieux, who knows these people better than I do, was talking of him the other night. I know no more of him than that."

"It's a pity Mr. Clarendieux can't find something better to do than to scandalize people of quality," said Mr. Hopwood, gravely; "but it is always the case with low people—never so happy as when talking of their betters."

"Well, are you coming to my house this evening?" asked the major, wishing to put an end to the subject.

"Why, major, I believe we must decline this evening," replied Hopwood, sententiously; "for I have a good deal to do, and I believe the ladies will be occupied likewise."

"Oh, very well, please yourself," said the major, taking up his hat; "I should have been glad to see you. I thought it might perhaps be an amusement to this poor child here," pointing to Georgina.

"Will Agnes be with you?" asked Georgina, interrupting her respected parent, who was

about to make a remark on the major's latter observation.

"O, indeed she will, and her beau too," answered the major, who observing Georgina look most inquiringly, continued—"by the way, you don't know of that affair?"

"She has not been here some time," said Georgina.

"She has made a conquest, that's the word, I believe, eh?" continued the major, patting Georgina's shoulder—"and a very fine fellow he is too—a gentleman, a man of family."

Here the elder Hopwoods exchanged glances of surprise.

"Is the gentleman of this neighbourhood, major?" asked Mrs. Hopwood.

"He has lately taken apartments here. I became acquainted with him through a letter of introduction he brought from an old military friend of mine; and, finding he was a fine fellow, I asked him to my house. I dare say you have seen him about; he always walks on this

road in the morning—a gentleman-like fellow, with black eyes and curling hair.”

Georgina, though she said nothing, at once recognized the handsome stranger, who passed the house just before the arrival of Lord Walgrave, when her attention was excited by the “little pony.” She sighed at what she thought the good fortune of her friend Agnes, in being able to visit, and amuse herself so agreeably in making conquests of handsome young men with “black eyes and curling hair.”

The major seemed to divine her thoughts. “Never mind, Georgina,” he said, laughing; “it will be your turn some day to get a beau, when your father will let you go out as other people do, and not—”

“Major!” exclaimed both the alarmed parents in a singularly emphatic and deprecatory tone. The old jeweller shook his head, and contracted his features into as rigid an expression as he was able; and his better half placed her finger upon her lips, and wore an ominous

frown as the major turned suddenly to learn the cause of their united ejaculation. Something was whispered to him about "the ears of innocence!"

"Nonsense, Hopwood!" said the veteran, half out of humour with what he fancied the absurdity of Hopwood's 'system:' "Will you never get cured of this stuff? would you shut up this poor girl for ever, and never let her see anybody but such old fellows as you and I?"

"Major, I do beg—"

"Well, well, I've done—I've done," said the major, shrugging his shoulders; "everybody may gang his own way for me; good bye—good bye, Georgy—," and the honest old soldier, tapping her on the back with his cane, as an apology for shaking hands, left the family to their own cogitations.

"I declare the major is quite rude," observed Mrs. Hopwood, pursing up her features, as the veteran disappeared; "what *would* Lord Walgrave have said?"

“ My dear, it is always the way with these soldiers,” returned the head of the family ; “ they think themselves privileged to say anything. I must say the major is very coarse. He has no discrimination. I shall discourage his visits.”

“ Why, my dear,” interposed Mrs. Hopwood, “ all the Egham people are very bad indeed ; what *can* you expect from people who have never seen the world, or mixed in high society ?”

“ Or become acquainted with the manners of the aristocracy,” observed the gentleman.

“ Truly, my dear,” returned the lady.

“ Mamma, will you accompany me for a little walk up the road ?” asked Georgina, whose countenance appeared a little suffused with a momentary flush. She had been looking through the blind, unobserved, it is true ; but much more attentively than on her work, when she suddenly threw down the collar on which she had been exercising her ingenuity, and

made this request. Mrs. Hopwood instantly acceded ; and Georgina, with all the alacrity of youth, was ready in a trice ; and having assisted her more tardy parent to equip herself, they were shortly hastening towards Englefield-green, at a pace altogether unusual with either ; for when the road presented no object of immediate interest, Georgina usually loitered away in the most listless manner imaginable. Now, however, she complained of being chilly, and her good parent, though at some inconvenience, forbore to complain of her speed.

They had not walked long before they observed, at some short distance before them, a young man strolling leisurely along. He had a book in his hand, at which he sometimes looked, but was more often with his eyes upon the ground, as if the theme of his own thoughts was the more agreeable of the two. It was the same handsome stranger who passed Mr. Hopwood's house when Georgina's attention had been so suddenly drawn to the " little pony "

in the front garden. He was a tall young man, of a very elegant form, and attired in that quiet, unobtrusive, yet finished style peculiar to a gentleman.

As they drew nearer to him, Georgina once or twice left her mother's side to pick some little flower from the hedge-row ; for though she had never before shown any marked passion for hedge-flowers, this morning she seemed particularly to fancy such a posy.

Close beside the spot where they then were, was a little excavation, intended as a small pit to catch water for the cattle in the adjoining pasture, and into which the hedge had fallen, forming a considerable gap by the footpath. The hollow was not more than two or three yards deep ; and, from the drought of the season, not more than a pail-full of muddy water remained at the bottom. The side from the road was covered with stumps of bushes, intermingled with which was grass and wild-flowers growing in the soil. Mrs. Hopwood walked

on, as her daughter stooped to gather more flowers, when her alarm was excited by a piercing scream ; and on looking anxiously round, she beheld Georgina half way down the hollow, holding herself by the stump of a bush, and apparently in an agony of fear. Mrs. Hopwood screamed in concert, at what she considered her daughter's imminent danger ; though she could render her no assistance, from fear ; but the attention of the gentleman, who was but a few yards in advance, being thus powerfully excited, he quickly turned, and observing Georgina's situation, as rapidly sprung to her side, and bore her unharmed to the footpath.

Georgina's nerves appeared peculiarly susceptible ; for every occasion of excitement was usually accompanied by fainting ; and this was the case in the present instance. The stranger looked around, as it were mechanically, for some situation on which, for her own comfort, he could place his helpless burthen. But a dusty road affords few conveniences for such

occasions ; he therefore held her in his arms, while her mother, hardly knowing what she did from agitation, untied the kerchief from her neck, took off her bonnet, unloosing the combs in the action, and letting all her beautiful curls at liberty—half crying all the time, and asking “ what on earth she should do ? ”

The stranger endeavoured to re-assure her ; declaring that there was not the least danger—that the young lady would recover in a few seconds ;—in short, suggesting the consolation usual in such cases.

Meanwhile, Georgina seemed in no haste to recover. Her head rested upon the gentleman’s shoulder, and she was supported by his left arm ; while the truly luxuriant shining hair, loosened from its folds—the delicately tinted complexion, on which the glow of exercise and health still lingered,—the rosy lips just apart—the long lashes of the closed eyes,—all these formed as interesting a picture as any young gentleman of three or four and twenty

might desire to look upon. To tell the truth, however, his admiration was not so manifest as might have been expected, or as that of Lord Walgrave under similar circumstances. He seemed rather to enter into the mother's feelings, than to be busied with his own; and was evidently more anxious for Georgina's recovery, than gratified by the contemplation of her beauty.

"How shall we ever be grateful enough to you, sir, for this kindness," exclaimed Mrs. Hopwood, alternately fanning her daughter, rubbing her hands, or applying a vinaigrette to her nose,—indeed, scarcely knowing what she did. "But what on earth shall I do for my poor child?"

"Be composed, madam," said the stranger, in a kind, courteous tone; "there is not the slightest danger. Perhaps some carriage will pass presently; or, indeed, I could almost carry the young lady, if she does not live far."

This, however, was an offer rather more polite than practicable; for Georgina was not so

perfectly sylph-like, as to be carried a quarter of a mile without considerable personal inconvenience. But the attempt was not needed ; for Mrs. Hopwood, raising her hands in an ecstasy of joy, exclaimed, as she saw a gentleman advancing, though at some distance, “ Oh ! I do believe that is Mr. Hopwood coming ! ”

The words appeared to operate as a better restorative to Georgina than the vinaigrette or the chafing ; for she immediately opened her eyes ; and the first use she made of them was, most eloquently to thank her preserver.

We have before observed, that Georgina’s eyes were beautiful—very beautiful ; and were so expressive, that language was not needed to explain the predominant feeling of her heart. On recovering, however, she still found herself very weak, and was thankful for the gentleman’s politely offered arm.

There are persons who possess the art of gaining the good opinion of all with whom they happen, for the time, to be associated. It is

not in what they say; for casual introduction gives no opportunity for display of language or talent. It is in the manner—the tone of voice—the expression of countenance—which sometimes creates so favourable an impression on the mind, that it is difficult to forget. We will not say positively whether the stranger possessed these advantages; but it is certain that, by the time they reached Mr. Hopwood's dwelling, Mrs. Hopwood thought him the "most agreeable, gentlemanly young man she had ever seen;" and Georgina was satisfied that, in her acute intuitive perception of first-rate character, she was not deceived.

The stranger would have left the ladies at their door, had he not been almost implored by the elder to walk in, and allow Mr. Hopwood to thank him for the important service he had rendered their child. In vain he protested that the service was so very trifling, that he was ashamed to consider it as such. She would take no refusal; and he was ushered into the

parlour, where was seated the respectable head of the family, having sundry papers and books of accounts before him, attired in an old grey morning coat, which he had slipped on for ease and economy, and wearing on his head a "Welsh wig;" having, as he fancied, taken "a little cold," by standing at the door without his hat, on the departure of his friend, Lord Walgrave.

"My dear, we have had a sad accident," said Mrs. Hopwood, who had preceded the others a few paces. "Georgina would certainly have lost her life, or been seriously injured, had it not been for the courage of this gentleman;" directing the attention of her helpmate to the stranger, who just then entered with Georgina. She then related to him the details of the accident.

The parent having first satisfied himself of the safety of his child, was profuse in his thanks to the preserver of her life, as both the ladies insisted that he was; and, as they took their

seats, Mrs. Hopwood whispered in her husband's ear, that he was the "man of family" mentioned by the major. The sentence operated upon him magically. He drew the Welsh wig from his crown with a rapid and convulsive clutch, as if the plebeian covering might possibly have escaped observation.

"If I could but have known, sir," said Hopwood, in a most apologetic tone, "that I should have been honoured with a visit from a gentleman of your—your—"

"I beg, sir, that you will not inconvenience yourself," interrupted the stranger; "I shall regret having entered, if I am at all the means of incommoding you."

"By no means—by no means," returned Hopwood. "It is merely, that being in such a dishabille is unusual to me; and I thought it but right to apologize——"

"I assure you, there is no occasion——"

"The fact is, I have just parted with my intimate friend, Lord Walgrave. By the bye,

perhaps you may know his lordship," suggested Hopwood.

"Not intimately," replied the other, with rather an indifferent air. "I believe I have once visited at his lordship's father's, the Earl of Lexington."

"Visited at the earl's!" repeated Mrs. Hopwood, in an under tone of astonishment. Hopwood began to fidget about in his chair.

"Really!" ejaculated Hopwood, "do you intend to stay long in Egham? Mr. ——"

"Bouverie is my name," said the visitor; "but I have not a card with me."

"Bouverie!" said Mr. Hopwood, as if revolving in his mind all the names of the aristocracy; "your name, sir, is familiar to me. Oh! now I recollect, it was gazetted this morning:" and taking up the 'Morning Herald,' then laying upon the table, he read, "'Her Majesty has been pleased to appoint Lord Frederick Bouverie to be one of the lords in waiting.'"

"He is my uncle," said Mr. Bouverie, smiling.

“His uncle a lord in waiting!” muttered Hopwood to himself, nervously crumpling the paper in his hand. “Excuse me one instant,” and he darted out of the room, without saying another word.

“I am very much afraid I inconvenience Mr. Hopwood,” remarked Mr. Bouverie; “my visit is at an unfortunate moment, I fear.”

“Mr. Hopwood will consider your visits most flattering at any moment,” replied Mrs. Hopwood; and here she would again have expressed her gratitude to the preserver of her child, as she persisted in calling Mr. Bouverie, had he not absolutely forbade it. The head of the establishment re-appeared in half a minute; during which short interval he had changed his grey coat and silk neckerchief for his usual respectable attire.

“Why, Mr. Hopwood, you surely have not thought it necessary to make such a stranger of me as to change your dress,” said Mr. Bouverie.

“ No, indeed ; but I feel more comfortable now,” said Hopwood. “ I don’t know how I came to have such things on ; but I hope, Mr. Bouverie, that we shall have the pleasure of seeing you often. Do you intend to reside at Egham ?”

“ O dear, no ; I merely wish to breathe a little fresh air and quiet for a short time. The neighbourhood is pretty enough, and the vicinity to town is convenient.”

“ Particularly if you have any occupation,” remarked Hopwood, hoping, possibly, by that leading question, that he just would be a little communicative respecting himself.

Mr. Bouverie, however, took no notice of the remark ; but turning toward Georgina, observed, “ And this young lady, I presume, sir, is your only daughter ?”

“ Our only child, sir,” replied Hopwood ; “ and I don’t know how sufficiently to thank you on her behalf. It’s a very ugly place that, I have often thought of speaking to the over-

scer of the road about it. It is by no means pleasant to think we have so dangerous a place in our vicinity."

"At all events," said Mr. Bouverie to Georgina, "from the fright you have experienced this morning, it will afford you no very pleasant reminiscence."

"I am not at all sure of that," returned Georgina. "If one is foolish enough to get into danger, it is no slight satisfaction to be rescued so gallantly. I am sure I shall have no occasion to think otherwise than pleasantly of the spot." And as she spoke, her cheeks mantled with colour. Mr. Bouverie looked at her as if he hardly knew whether to take the compliment in its fullest sense, or as a mere girlish expression of feeling.

"She is a complete child of nature, sir," said the proud father; "aided, I trust, by the best education and example—innocence itself!" he added in a whisper.

Mr. Bouverie bowed politely an assent to the observation, and rose to take his leave.

“ You leave us soon, Mr. Bouverie,” said Hopwood.

“ I thank you, I am obliged to go, as I expect a relation of mine from town on particular business, Colonel Clifford.”

“ Ha ! Colonel Clifford,” repeated Hopwood, as if he had mentioned the name of an old acquaintance.

“ What, you know Clifford, eh ?” said Bouverie, “ he is one of the Duchess of Gloucester’s equerries.”

“ Oh, no ; not exactly, I have heard his name often. But, now you are here, pray name a day when you will do me the honour to dine with me ; say to morrow at six o’clock — only ourselves — quite plain — make no stranger of you—you dislike ceremony, I know.”

“ With all my heart,” said Mr. Bouverie ; “ I shall have great pleasure : you are quite right in saying I dislike ceremony ; I assure you there is nothing I dislike so much. Good

morning;" and bowing to the ladies, Mr. Bouverie withdrew.

"Quite the gentleman, I declare," observed Mrs. Hopwood, directly the door closed upon him.

"A first rate person, depend on it," said Hopwood, emphatically; "I know the manners of these people well; nevertheless, there is a little bit of mystery about him."

"But, my dear, he has an uncle, a lord in waiting," suggested Mrs. Hopwood.

And a relation an equerry," observed Mr. Hopwood.

"And he visits at the earl's," continued Mrs. Hopwood.

"And he saved my life mamma," said Georgina.

"True, my love; and he is one of the gentlest men I ever *did* see," said Mrs. Hopwood, "except indeed, Lord Walgrave."

"The acquaintance of this young man too, may prove useful," observed Hopwood, musing;

“if Lord Walgrave should not—hum—why then this—hum—you understand my love,” he added in an under tone, to his wife.

“Perfectly, my dear,” returned Mrs. Hopwood, in the same sort of confidential whisper ; “besides, you know my love,” she added, with true feminine tact, “men, however unexceptionable, should not have it all their own way ; they become careless, when they are secure.”

“True, my dear, *very* true,” said Hopwood, “yes ; we will cultivate the friendship of this young man. I wish, however, he had been more communicative about himself ; you see he eluded my question.”

“You had better invitet he major, my dear ; —let me see, a nice bit of salmon—a turkey poult.”

“What his object can be down here, completely puzzles me. I have it,” cried Hopwood, touching his forehead with the tip of his finger, as if he had made a notable discovery . “I will just step to Sniggles, he knows every

thing, and every body's business. It is true I have passed him once or twice, lately; but a dinner will set all to rights; *he* will draw him out, and unravel the mystery."

"Do you know, my dear," suggested Mrs. Hopwood, interrupting the current of her husband's thoughts—"I should not be at all surprised if he is waiting for some appointment."

"Ah! a government appointment," repeated her spouse. "A secret mission:—egad, my love, you've hit it; depend on it he is waiting *incog.* for orders; depend on it, a diplomatist. No doubt of it," said Hopwood striking the table energetically, by way of a clincher, "else why this mystery—this privacy—a man of family—of such connexions—you are right, my love:—I will go and invite Sniggles for to-morrow, and give him the cue to draw him out:—we must know more about this young man."

In a small place like Egham, every bit of gossip spreads like wild-fire, and with an abundance of embellishment. No sooner had Hop-

wood communicated his suspicions of Mr. Bouverie's real calling and rank to Mr. Sniggles, and invited him to dinner, to meet the supposed dignitary, than the gossip proceeded from one acquaintance to another, enlarging at every recital, so that by the evening, it was confidently understood by the major's visitors, that Mr. Bouverie was a nobleman *incog.*; the intimate friend of Lord Melbourne, and about to proceed on a secret and confidential mission to the Emperor of Russia.

The Hopwood family had retired early to rest, according to their custom; but Georgina, instead of going to bed, had seated herself at the window, thinking over the events of the day. She was not particularly pleased with the result. Her father's manœuvres respecting Lord Walgrave were not lost upon her. She easily divined his plans, and firmly resolved to have her own way, whenever it might suit his convenience to consult her inclination.

Mere worldly consideration seldom enters

into the calculations of a girl of seventeen in her views of future life ; and the truth is, that Georgina thought more of the young and handsome Mr. Bouverie, whether he were aristocratic or humble, than of Lord Walgrave, though he might trace his ancestry to the Cæsars.

Georgina had a keen perception of the ridiculous, and had a sly, satirical way of amusing herself at the expense of others. Nothing delighted her so much as the opportunity of indulging her vanity and love of mischief together. She would, in fact, have been a finished coquette, but that this unamiable characteristic was fortunately somewhat counteracted by a heart formed for better things. She respected worth, and had formed to herself a standard of high character ; ideal, certainly, from her inexperience of the world, but one to which she could look up with admiration. Those on whom she would play off her *espiègleries*, would generally, therefore, be legitimate subjects for ridicule.

Vanity first prompted her conquest of the cadet, and her love of mischief the continuation of the adventure. Her conduct on that occasion was in a great degree the result of thoughtlessness ; but, indeed, when vanity is piqued, women show but little consideration for each other ; it is a perfectly natural jealousy in the sex, and must not be placed to Georgina's disparagement. Lord Walgrave, she knew, was a mere man of fashion ; and therefore the little spice of coquetry by which she fixed the admiration of his lordship, was quite excusable. But, with regard to Mr. Bouverie, she was actuated by feelings altogether different. She had beheld him at first only as a casual passer-by, and was then struck by his superior air and truly handsome appearance—an admiration which is not singular, considering the retired life she was obliged to lead. But when she heard from the major that he was a “fine fellow,” and a “man of family ;” and when, from her father's refusal to go to the

party, no chance existed of meeting him, she at once adopted the bold plan of affording him an opportunity of introducing himself, and to judge for herself whether he was really the superior person his exterior indicated. She was rather mortified, however, to think he had taken so little notice of her. He had scarcely once directed his regards towards her. How different from the fervent admiration of the cadet, and the impressive though polite attentions of Lord Walgrave. Yet the tone of his voice, though not addressed to her, was still in her ear ; the expression of his dark eyes, though not for her, was still in her heart ; the others were already forgotten.

Georgina was pondering on these things, when looking towards the road, she saw two figures walking slowly along the foot-path on the opposite side. She looked earnestly ; she could not be deceived ; yes, it was Mr. Bouverie, and, on his arm, was Agnes Graham ! He was evidently escorting her home from the

major's party. It was a clear, beautiful night, and she could see distinctly. He was bending towards her; and in his right hand he clasped her's, which was resting upon his arm.

The sight fell upon Georgina's heart like an ice-bolt! The truth of Mr. Bouverie's indifference flashed before her—he loved Agnes! Her mind had been so completely occupied with him from the first moment she saw him, that the words of the major had been entirely forgotten. Agnes had never once entered her thoughts; and now she was rudely awakened to the fact that she had given way to an indiscreet feeling of admiration, which had even become painful, and for one who seemed entirely engrossed with another. Poor Georgina threw herself upon the bed, and relieved the fullness of her heart by a flood of tears.

CHAPTER X.

“Hope is a lover’s staff; walk hence with that,
And manage it against despairing thoughts.”

GEORGINA was not mistaken in the identity of the person she had seen from her chamber-window. It was, as she supposed, that Mr. Bouverie was escorting her friend Agnes home from the major’s party. She was perfectly right in her conjecture that Mr. Bouverie had, during the time of their interview that morning, looked upon her with indifference; for during the time of his intimacy with the major, he had many opportunities of meeting Agnes, and had really become much interested in her truly unaffected amiability of disposition, and ingenuous

character. He had sought every means which these frequent advantages afforded him, to make himself acquainted with her true feeling and sentiment—for she was then almost a constant visitor at the major's house; and the result was, that in his opinion Agnes was the most single-hearted, the most charming girl, he had ever met with. This feeling, strengthened as it was by a period of intimacy and fast increasing into a strong attachment, was not likely to be set aside by an accidental introduction to Georgina, even possessing, as she did, some trifling superiority in personal beauty.

During this state of, as it may be termed, their preliminary acquaintance, Mr. Bouverie had not sought any intelligence of Agnes' family;—he thought only of herself, and never doubted for an instant but that her connexions were as undeniable as he could wish them to be.

Agnes was less gay than usual on her walk homeward. She had heard the speculation re-

garding the rank of Mr. Bouverie amongst the gossips at the major's, in which the opinions of his exalted position were freely hazarded. It was then that Agnes began to be seriously aware of the state of her own feelings with regard to him, and to reflect on the hopelessness of indulging them. And when she thought of her own insignificance—of her home—her mother—contrasted with the brilliant career which, by common report, awaited Mr. Bouverie, the tears started to her eyes at the conviction of the improbability of realizing those dreams to which his earnest attentions had given rise.

Mr. Bouverie had likewise communicated to her the adventure of the morning, which had sadly discomposed her; for since the major's last party, when Georgina was present, Agnes thought she had discovered a shade in her friend's character which she had never before observed; and she absolutely dreaded Georgina's attractions, and her mode of giving them effect, which she had fearfully exaggerated in her own

mind, from the talismanic effect she remembered them to have produced upon the cadet. The easy transfer Georgina had made on that occasion of the student's heart, had quite astonished Agnes at the time, but had produced no other effect than a momentary mortification of that vanity which is inseparable from human nature. She had no real regard for the individual, consequently the easy withdrawing of former attentions did not in the least affect her. But with Mr. Bouverie she felt, that if Georgina should succeed in estranging his regard, it would destroy her peace for ever.

The indulgence of these feelings made Agnes sorrowful as she walked home, accompanied by Mr. Bouverie. She felt a certain vague presentiment that she was about to lose him ; and although her own good sense showed her the weakness of indulging in serious hopes of a happy sequel to their present intimacy, she could not but wish, if it must be severed, that the blow might be dealt by some other

hand than that of her old schoolfellow and friend.

“ But why are you so sad this evening, Agnes ?” inquired her companion, who had in vain endeavoured to rally her from her evident dejection ; “ tell me what has happened ?” he added, kindly.

“ I’m sure I could hardly give you any reason for it,” replied Agnes ; and then after a pause she added—“ But do you really intend to dine at Mr. Hopwood’s to-morrow ?”

“ Most certainly, I cannot do otherwise,” said Mr. Bouverie ; “ they pressed me to come with so much kindness, it would positively have been uncivil to refuse.”

“ And you thought Georgina very pretty ?”

“ There can hardly be two opinions about it : she is very handsome.”

“ O, pray let go my hand, I am very warm,” said Agnes.

Mr. Bouverie looked at her with a little surprise, but made no remark. He did not

see the flush upon her cheek as he spoke of Georgina, nor if he had, would he have imagined the cause.

“ But I think you told me you were very intimate with this family yourself, Agnes ? ”

“ Yes ; Georgina and I were school-fellows, and I used to call upon her every day ; but I thought I perceived some little coolness, and I have not been there so much lately.”

“ It must be fancy, surely ; what reason could they have had for coolness with you ? ” said Mr. Bouverie. “ Shall I say anything ? ” he added.

“ No, no, I will call myself,” quickly returned Agnes ; “ I dare say it is mere supposition ; I should not like the subject to be mentioned, if it should prove a mere whim of mine.”

“ It shall be as you please,” said Mr. Bouverie ; “ but come, cheer up, Agnes ; I never saw you in such bad spirits—you are generally the gayest of the gay.”

Agnes could only answer by a deep sigh.

“ My dear Agnes,” he continued, “ you have evidently something upon your mind which distresses you. Tell me what it is—treat me as a friend—a friend who takes an interest, a deep interest, in everything that concerns you.”

“ I fear I have been very imprudent,” sighed Agnes.

“ In what way ; pray explain, Agnes ?”

“ I mean with regard to yourself,” returned Agnes, her natural candour struggling against her natural reserve ; “ you will be soon called to fulfil your important duties ; you will leave this place, perhaps for ever, and forget me.”

If he could have seen her eyes at that moment, he would have seen them filled with tears.

“ Important duties ! leave this place !” repeated the young man with astonishment ; “ my dear girl, I don’t know what you mean. But as to forgetting you, Agnes ! If I have not explained in set phrase the sentiments I entertain for you, it is because I believe such feel-

ings have a language of their own ; but, be assured, charming Agnes, the interest you excited in me on my first seeing you, has increased into a deep and fervent regard, which I feel will never cease but with existence ;” and, as he uttered the last words in a tender and assuring tone, he repossessed himself of the hand she had so pettishly withdrawn at the mention of Georgina’s beauty. “ But tell me,” he added in a gayer tone ; “ tell me what you mean by my being ‘ called to fulfil important duties ;’ I know of none, I assure you, of more importance, nor half so much interest to me, as the present.”

“ I have often heard,” said Agnes, “ that gentlemen, who are educated as diplomatists, insensibly acquire the habit of concealment even from those with whom they are most intimate ; in other words, of clothing their thoughts in diplomatic language ”

“ You are rather severe on these gentlemen, Agnes,” said the young man, laughing ; “ but

what has that to do with my 'important duties.' "

"To tell you the truth," said Agnes, hesitatingly—"for I cannot be diplomatic myself—I have been told your real situation in life."

"Well?"

"And I cannot but be sensible, notwithstanding your kind expressions to me, that your brilliant career will place you at such a distance from me—in short, though I cannot doubt for a moment your sincerity—yet I am afraid you deceive yourself. Though I am very young, I have been so accustomed to disappointment and mortification, that I almost fear to hope."

"My pretty Agnes, you speak like a little philosopher, or sage of seventeen," said Mr. Bouverie, gaily; "but pray where did you obtain intelligence of my 'brilliant career?'"

"O, at the major's, this evening," replied Agnes; "it is all discovered."

"Hum! that's a pity;" said the young man, with mock gravity.

“ Yes, I was afraid it would vex you,” said Agnes.

“ Well, since it is so, it is important that I should know all that has been said. Let me know the extent of their discoveries,” said the man of mystery.

“ Well, they seem to be aware that you are a nobleman of distinguished rank !”

“ Ah !”

“ That you are an intimate friend—I believe relation—of the prime minister !”

“ Ah !”

“ And that you are to be our Russian ambassador !”

“ What ?” exclaimed the young man, putting his handkerchief to his face.

“ Our ambassador to the court of Russia !”

“ Ambassador to the court of Russia !” Here Mr. Bouverie made a full stop, and broke into such a fit of laughter as to astonish Agnes, who could perceive nothing laughable in the enumeration of his dignities.

“ This is too good,” he said, as his mirth somewhat subsided, “ and in the name of heaven ! who, my dear girl, has been imposing on your simplicity ?”

“ O, I heard it from Mr. Sniggles, and Mr. Hopwood has positively said so.”

“ And the major ?” inquired Mr. Bouverie.

“ O, he laughed, and said nothing ; but I think he believes it too.”

“ Then I can assure you, if that is any satisfaction to you,” returned the supposed ambassador, “ that there is not one particle of truth in the whole story, and where they picked up such nonsense, I can’t imagine.”

“ What, then, you are *not* a nobleman of high rank ?”

“ No more than you are a duchess.”

“ Nor a relation of the minister ?”

“ I never spoke to him in my life.”

“ Nor the ambass—,” but she could not finish the sentence ; for his smothered merriment, and the conviction that struck her of the

absurdity of the rumour, produced such a reaction of feeling, that they both laughed most heartily together.

“ Well, I am *so* glad,” said Agnes, with her wonted gaiety of tone ; “ the belief that you were such a personage *did* make me very melancholy.”

“ How such a report could be circulated seems astounding,” said Mr. Bouverie.

“ I think it arose from Mr. Hopwood and Mr. Sniggles,” replied Agnes.

“ Ah, then, that accounts for the extreme attention I met with from Mr. Hopwood ; I shall expect no little amusement from him to-morrow,” observed the young man, smiling at some conceit which crossed his mind ; “ and to-morrow evening I will tell you all about it, Agnes ; for I shall leave early. Shall you be at the major’s ?”

“ No, I believe not,” replied Agnes ; “ for I think they have determined to set off to-morrow to the north of England to visit a relation of

the major's. It has been delayed a long time ; but they have at last resolved—”

“ The major said something of it ; but I did not understand they were going so soon,” said Mr. Bouverie. “ I must, however, seek an introduction to your mother, Agnes.”

“ She is gone to town for a few days,” said Agnes ; “ but if you leave Mr. Hopwood's early, you can call at our house : there can be no impropriety in it—at least, I should think not—can there?”

“ Clearly not. Indeed, if your mother were at home, I would introduce myself,” said Mr. Bouverie. “ I stand well enough in the world to do that, although I am not an ambassador. Indeed, after what you have heard, it would be but right to tell you more of myself, and in what my ‘ brilliant’ prospects consist.”

“ Do come then ; and come early,” said Agnes earnestly.

They had by this time arrived at the gate of Beverley-house.

“ I have likewise something to say to you,” she added.

“ Be assured I will come.—God bless you!”

“ Farewell !” and she entered the gate, as he turned to retrace his steps to Egham.

CHAPTER XI.

“ ‘ Arcades ambo,’ *id est*, blackguards both.”

BESIDE a cheerful fire, at Mr. Robinson's office in Jermyn-street, were seated the friends, Jeffries and Hunsman, pleasantly occupied in social discourse.

Mr. John Jeffries, after experiencing the vicissitudes of the world in his pursuit of wealth and distinction, had been glad to make overtures to his former master, who, with that philanthropy which formed so conspicuous a trait in his character, being better aware than most of his professional excellencies, charitably forgave him his former errors, and hailed his return to the honest duties of his calling. The confidential clerk was therefore much in the

same position as the reader found him at the commencement of the first volume ; having been a gainer of nothing excepting additional experience, which years and intercourse with the world seldom fail to teach. Mr. Robinson's conduct towards him was, however, marked by a slight degree of reserve, which the acute Jeffries could not but be sensible of, and which was not a little mortifying to his feelings.

“ I'm thinking,” slowly remarked Hunsman after a pause, and having adjusted, with particular minuteness, some fragments of stray sea-coal upon the blazing mass, as if to allow his thoughts full time to resolve themselves into intelligibility ;—“ I'm thinking, I say, Jack,”—

“ So you said before,” interposed his friend with vivacity.

—“ That we are a precious set of rogues, Jack !”

The interjectional “ Umph ” of Mr. Jeffries, at this startling conclusion of his friend's reflections, might be likened to a note of admiration

at the end of a sentence : it expressed nothing very distinctly. It was difficult to say whether Mr. Jeffries was astonished or pleased at his companion's pleasantry.

“ Not that I'm remarkably melancholy about *that*, mind ye,” resumed Hunsman quickly, lest his friend might perhaps mistake his sentiment ;—“ but I don't see, in all this blessed time, that we are a copper the better for it. I haven't a *mag* myself, and I don't believe, Jack, that you could give me change for it, if I had.”

Jeffries drew a long breath, as if he contemplated a serious attack upon a pot of ale : it was probably intended as a sigh in confirmation of Hunsman's last speculation.

“ There was my hundred pounds—but lord ! it vanished afore I knew what I was well about. I thought of doing summut in the coal and tatur line. And then you must set up for a gentleman ;—and no blame to you, mind ye—only you see how long that lasted.”

“ My misfortunes were the result of circumstances, Mr. Hunsman,—circumstances entirely beyond my control,” said Jeffries with a tinge of reserve; for the subject was far from pleasant to him. At this apology, made by Jeffries for his ill success, Hunsman indulged in a peculiar chuckle.

“ When I was over the way, yonder,” said he, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder, intending to convey a notion of the locality where he once officiated as turnkey,—“ I never remember to have seen a swell as had swindled his creditors, or as was unfortunate,—that’s what they call it, I believe,—as didn’t say it was the result of circumstances — ‘ circumstances out of their control ’—them are the very words. It wasn’t their fault—O no; in course not;—they couldn’t help it, poor lambs!—it was ‘ *circumstances.* ’ ” And here the worthy speaker stretched his palms upon his knees, and, bending forward, indulged in constrained, yet not the less hearty, merriment.

“ Jabez, you are a fool !” said Jeffries, not, however, with any asperity of tone ; for he knew, by experience, it was useless to be offended with his friend’s pleasant turn of mind. “ I don’t mean in all things,—but— ”

“ No ; if you did, I’m bless’d if I don’t know the greatest fool of the two !”—and Hunsman’s pleasantry again manifested itself in half-audible cachinnations.

“ You sometimes talk of things you don’t understand, Jabez,” continued the clerk, urbanely :—“ and then—but, however, I have intended some time past, to talk to you about our prospects,—for it must be confessed, they are not over and above bright,—and see if we can’t mend them a bit.”

“ Now you speak like a trump, Jack !” exclaimed his companion, clapping him on the shoulder with a vigour which more accorded with his own than the feelings of his friend, whom he nearly unseated. “ I am willing to allow you all the *nous* you’ve got—a precious

sight more than I have, Jack—I know that—and I know, if you think over the matter, something may be done to better us. I see pretty clearly, that we're standing on our last legs up at 'the house,' and even them are giving way very fast. The only one that's done any good among us, is your governor, Jack."

"Not so much as you think," returned the other. "He is too fond of *this*, to do much good :"—and the confidential clerk significantly shook his elbow, by way of hinting his master's failing. "He has picked up a nice lot of tin in his time; but I know he hasn't got much of it now."

"Well, I thought he had been more awake than that," said Hunsman.

"The best of us have our failings," replied Jeffries, placidly; "and that's his. Bating that, there's only two that's a match for him—myself, and *one more*."

Hunsman looked at his companion as if

he perfectly comprehended the implied, though mysterious association.

“ I b’lieve you,” said he, with emphasis. “ But, Jack, what do you think of my misses’s new rig for raising the wind ?”

“ It’s a bad speck, Jabez,” said Jeffries, decidedly :—“ she has no more interest now than I have ; and if she catches a few flats, and takes their money, when they find they have no government places, they may get savage, and then there will be a blow-up.”

“ Very true,” said Hunsman thoughtfully : “ do you know the cove as they expect here to-day ?”

“ Don’t I ?” said Jeffries, as if any doubt of his intelligence conveyed a reproach. “ He is a friend of Laurence’s—he that’s going to marry Vernon’s sister. Laurence brought him here one day about some business ; and when my governor knew how his affairs stood, he hatched up this little bit of plunder.”

“How much is he to come down with?” asked Hunsman.

“Six hundred down, before he receives his appointment.”

“Then I wish he may get it,” added Hunsman, who with infinite humour slowly raised his fore-finger, and placed it beside his nose, thereby causing the unusually thoughtful visage of Jeffries to relax into a smile. “Well now,” he continued, “the ‘old un,’ though talkative enough about matters sometimes, never so much as hinted a word of this to me.”

“No more did my governor to me,” said Jeffries.

“The devil !” ejaculated Hunsman.

“Why, there’s more ways of knowing things than being told : you know that, Jabez. I wouldn’t live with my man,” continued Jeffries, in the pride of superior intellect, “if I couldn’t know his affairs just as well as my own.”

“Well, but I thought your governor had

made all safe there, since," said Hunsman inquiringly, and pointing towards the baize door.

"The governor's a very clever fellow, Jabez," answered Jeffries; "but, you know, stone walls have ears, and so have doors, though they may be plated with iron."

"Why, you haven't?" said Hunsman, opening his eyes at Jeffries, as if he had seen him for the first time.

"Haven't I though!" and the two friends looked at each other for a few seconds, and broke into a simultaneous laugh.

Jeffries arose, and having bolted the office door, beckoned his friend towards the scene of a former *espionage* which the reader will doubtless remember at the commencement of the first volume. He then opened the inner door, and displayed that which closed Mr. Robinson's private office, of which he invariably kept the key himself, and which, since Mr. Jeffries's explanation with him one morning, he had

carefully covered with iron sheeting, concealed, however, for the sake of appearance, with green cloth, ornamented with brass-headed nails.

“Now, Jabez, my boy,” said his friend, triumphantly, “look narrowly over that door, and tell me what you can see suspicious.” Jabez looked warily, but not a scratch in the cloth was discernible. Jeffries then, with the assistance of his nail and the point of a penknife, gently raised one of the brass heads which, instead of a nail, covered a wooden peg, and exactly fitted a considerable orifice, punched into the iron plate and through the door, though without perforating the cloth on the other side. For all the purposes of hearing, therefore, when Jeffries was between the doors, it served him completely. The confidential clerk having replaced the peg, looked round at his friend.

Hunsman stood for a few moments as if in mental contemplation of the mystery he had

just witnessed, and then, as if all comment or inquiry must be superfluous, he slapped his open hand energetically upon his thigh, and ejaculated, "Well, I'm d—d!" The friends then resumed their seats by the fire.

"Now, Jabez," said Jeffries, in a sort of patronising tone, which his recent triumph of ingenuity entitled him to assume, "my boy, we are old friends, and I have put you up to this rig because I know its safe with you."

"I'm blest if ever I split on you, Jack," was the instant reply of the incorruptible Hunsman; "but you know *that*."

"Why, it isn't the interest of either of us to split, Jabez," said Jeffries; "because, if we do anything, it must be together. Now, I want to practise in the Court again, Jabez; for, between you and I, the governor doesn't trust me quite as he ought; I shall do better if I get the chance again."

"Avast there!" interposed Hunsman; "I hear somebody on the stairs."

Jeffries instantly placed himself at his desk, with his nose upon the parchment, and Hunsman seized his hat and put back the chair, which double movement was scarcely accomplished before the door opened, and Mr. Robinson entered, accompanied by Mrs. Maxwell.

“Have you been here long, Hunsman?” inquired the lady.

“Only this blessed minute stepped in, ma’am; one minute more, and I should have been arter you,” was the ready reply of the ex-functionary.

“Has any person been this morning, Mr. Jeffries?” asked Mr. Robinson, blandly.

“Nobody at all particular, sir,” answered Mr. Jeffries; “except, indeed, Griggs.”

“Ah! and what does that poor man propose?” inquired the solicitor, with an appearance of feeling.

“He says, sir, he cannot take up Smith’s returned acceptance of £20; and if you arrest

him, he must go to Whitecross-street, and his children to the workhouse."

"Dear me! dear me!" said the solicitor, shrugging his shoulders, as if the subject was painful: "the effects of improvidence! These are the great drawbacks on our profession, Mrs. Maxwell—our feelings constantly at war with our duty. Mr. Jeffries, tell the officer to treat the poor gentleman with respect. Children to the workhouse—wife died last week—ugh! well, well!" and with these expressions of feeling, the humane solicitor opened the door of his office with his branch key, and left the two friends again to themselves. Many facetious signs passed between them on the exit of the lady and gentleman, evidently in comic allusion to the solicitor's touching remarks.

"Your misses wont go back before eight or nine o'clock to-night," whispered Jeffries to Hunsman; "so that you can come to me at the Three Crowns. I shall have something to say to you; something that's been running in

my mind. I think we can do something together—d'ye understand?"

Hunsman nodded to his friend, as if the invitation and the object of it were perfectly comprehended by him, and promised his attendance.

A smart rap at the door announced the expected visitor, which proved to be no other than Mr. Bouverie. He was speedily ushered into the adjoining office by the obsequious Jeffries, and received with many bows by the solicitor, and with dignified politeness by Mrs. Maxwell.

"Now, Jeff.," said the impatient Hunsman.

"Hold your tongue!" returned the other, in a low tone, but with an authoritative manner; "if he was only to catch a word, we're done; he is as wary as an old fox since *that* time. Stop: I had better play off a little game upon him." With that, Mr. Jeffries boldly knocked at his master's door. The solicitor immediately appeared.

“As you are likely, perhaps, to be some time engaged, sir,” said the confidential clerk, “would you be kind enough to spare me for half an hour? Mr. Hunsman says he will attend to the door.”

“Why, Mr. Jeffries,” replied his master, hesitating, “don’t you think it would be advisable to wait a very short time? I shall not be long with this gentleman, and the rest of the day is your own.”

“Oh, certainly, sir,” returned Jeffries; “I beg pardon for interrupting you; I only thought, perhaps, I might have been back before you had finished. I’ll wait, sir, of course.” As the solicitor retired, Hunsman gently shook his head. Admiration of his friend’s genius overpowered every other feeling.

“You was right, Jack, when you said only *two* of you were a match for the governor,” said Hunsman, thoughtfully; “but, I’m thinking, it would be hard to find *one* match for you.” Jeffries took the compliment as it was

intended, and, without further waste of words, motioned Hunsman to be on the alert, and gently sliding between the doors, prepared to take an immediate interest in what was proceeding within.

“Of course, sir, I need not apologize for this apparent informality in your introduction to this lady.” Jeffries had no difficulty in recognising the bland tones of the solicitor. “It is rather a delicate business, sir, for a professional man to interfere in ; but the high respect I have for your friend Captain Laurence, and the anxiety you manifest that your object should be accomplished without the interference of your friends, has induced me to interest this lady in your behalf.”

“Sir, I feel much indebted to you,” interposed Mr. Bouverie.

“Sir, I feel always most anxious to be of any service to my friends, and such I may venture, I believe, to call Captain Laurence ; the intimate connexion, I might almost say re-

lative, of my respected client and friend, Mr. Vernon," continued Mr. Robinson. "But, as I said, this lady, who I have had the happiness to be acquainted with for some time, has it in her power to forward your views. I believe, my dear madam, I may be quite explicit with this gentleman ; for as this business has been sufficiently understood, it only remains to close the terms."

"O, by all means," returned Mrs. Maxwell ;
"it is what I wish."

"Then, sir, this lady, who by the way has particular reasons for being *incognito*, consents to procure you the appointment of a district paymastership within six weeks, if you can oblige her with the loan of six hundred pounds. I say loan, because she is not accustomed to any traffic of this kind, therefore she will only consent to receive the money as a loan for twelve months."

"You have stated my ideas precisely as I could have wished, Mr. Robinson," said the

lady ; “ I could not accept the money on any other terms.”

“ Madam, I am sure I have every reason to be obliged by your liberality,” said Mr. Bouverie, “ and you need not fear on my part any desire to pry into your secrecy ; I can only say I shall be most happy to furnish you with the sum you require, by the hands of our worthy friend, Mr. Robinson.”

The solicitor bowed very low.

“ Permit me,” added Mr. Bouverie, “ to hand you a purse containing one hundred sovereigns ; the remainder of the sum I will pay into Mr. Robinson’s hands to-morrow.”

Mr. Robinson took the purse, and reaching his cash-box, placed it therein ; and taking thence a bank note for £50, doubled it, and presented it with a low obeisance to Mrs. Maxwell. The amount of the note was of course unobserved by Mr. Bouverie.

“ I am happy to be the humble means of service to those whom I respect,” said Mr. Ro-

binson ; “ permit me, therefore, madam, to hand you this £100 bank of England note; it will be more portable for you than gold. We of the profession have a sad character, sir,” said he, turning to Mr. Bouverie, “ for retaining some portion of whatever passes through our hands ; but I am always contented with the profits of my profession. When I can have the happiness, as in this instance, to act solely as a friend—disinterestedly—it is my greatest enjoyment.”

“ You are always so *very* kind, Mr. Robinson,” said Mrs. Maxwell, raising her handkerchief to her face in rather an equivocal manner ; and having observed the amount of the note, placed it in her purse.

“ Sir, I must say it is rare to meet with that liberality in the profession which you have the reputation to possess,” said Mr. Bouverie.

“ Indeed, sir, I fear I ill-deserve the kind opinions of my friends,” replied the solicitor, with much humility, but with more truth than

he was in the general habit of affording gratuitously ; “ and when did you say that I might expect the pleasure of seeing you again, sir ? ”

“ O, to-morrow, in all probability. I dine a short distance in the country to-day ; but to-morrow I shall be in town, and will take the opportunity of calling to complete our arrangement.”

Jeffries noiselessly emerged from his concealment, and regained his companion’s side.

“ By jingo ! Jabez, if I had that man’s abilities I would be Lord Mayor before the year was out,” said the clerk in a whisper to his confederate ; “ he smooths them over so nicely—makes ’em all believe he is doing ’em such a favour.”

“ And so he is, if they did but know it—a particular favour—taking a world of temptation out of their way,” added Jabez, grinning.

“ Hush ! ” and Jeffries seated himself at his desk as the door of the solicitor’s office opened, and Mr. Bouverie took his leave of the solicitor, who accompanied him to the outer door.

“ Mr. Jeffries, I trust I have not detained you long,” said Mr. Robinson ; “ but your time is now your own. I shall accompany Mrs. Maxwell, who has some further business on hand. I shall not return again to-day.”

Jeffries bowed his thanks.

“ Hunsman, you can bring the carriage for me at eight o'clock,” said Mrs. Maxwell, as she left the office with the solicitor.

“ I'll be there, ma'am,” replied Hunsman, as he closed the door after them ; “ and now, Jeff, I'll cut, and be with you at the Three Crowns by five o'clock. I must just see how my old woman gets on.” So saying, the excellent Hunsman left his accomplished friend, “ Jeff,” to enjoy the advantage of his solitary cogitations on the scene he had just witnessed.

CHAPTER XII.

“Hast thou then lived in courts?”

“I am no courtier,—no fawning dog of state,
To lick and kiss the hand that buffets me.”

MR. and Mrs. Hopwood having talked themselves into a full assurance of the ‘distinguished’ though ‘concealed’ rank of their new acquaintance, Mr. Bouverie, looked forward with great interest and curiosity to the result of the table stratagem for ‘drawing him out,’ and thereby assuring themselves of the propriety of cultivating his intimacy.

The sagacious Hopwood had fully calculated upon the stimulus the knowledge of so handsome a young man visiting at the house would impart to Lord Walgrave; for he began to be

nervously anxious that the proposal of his lordship should have a settled and decided character. There was a chance, likewise, that this young man might be as good a *parté* as the noble Viscount himself; or, at all events, supposing that the brilliant hopes of the Hopwood family were destined to be deferred, Mr. Bouverie's intimacy with the ministry could at any time procure him, Hopwood, a commission of the peace; and an active county magistrate, in stirring times, might make himself sufficiently conspicuous to merit the gratitude of the reigning powers.

Mrs. Hopwood had devoted the best of her ability to make up a "nice little dinner;" and the head of the establishment had been revolving in his mind the party he should invite; but at last he determined to have it "snug." The major, unfortunately, was going that day with his lady to town, to proceed to the north of England; and the only individual he could ask, excepting the gossip, Mr. Sniggles, who

was to act the principal part on the occasion, was old Mr. Grayling, one of the King's Head parlour customers, who had at least the reputation of being a rich man, and one so fond of the bottle, that his conversation would not interfere with their projected attack upon Mr. Bouverie's confidence. He would therefore occupy the vacant seat at table, and make up the select party of six.

Mr. Hopwood's usual hour of dining was five, excepting at the times of his absence from home on business in London—then the family dined earlier; but on this occasion the repast was deferred till six. Mr. Sniggles had arrived some time, and had passed the interval in confidential discourse with his friend Hopwood. At a quarter to six Mr. Grayling entered, and seated himself in one corner of the room, waiting patiently the announcement of dinner. Neither did Mr. Bouverie keep them waiting, six o'clock having hardly struck when he was announced. He was of course received with that

degree of respect and cordiality due to the supposed representative of rank and talent.

“How pleased Mr. Bouverie looks, my dear!” whispered Mrs. Hopwood to her husband.

“He already feels himself at home with us, my dear,” answered the latter. “A good sign,” he added sagaciously.

Dinner was speedily announced, when Mr. Sniggles, by a preconcerted plan, offered his arm to the lady of the house, leaving Mr. Bouverie to perform the same act of gallantry to Georgina; while Mr. Grayling and Mr. Hopwood brought up the rear—to the dining-room.

Nothing had been spared to make the dinner what it should be. A nobleman and ambassador did not dine with them every day. So excellent, indeed, was the entertainment, that Mr. Sniggles talked less than usual; and the constant repetition of “Thank you,” and “If you please,” were the only words Mr. Grayling was heard to utter. Indeed, the habits of the latter gentleman, on like occasions, were peculiar; he

never opened his mouth till dinner commenced, and then never closed it till after the dessert.

Mr. Bouverie seemed to be the most animated of the party. Each little gaiety uttered by him was received with the most marked delight. Mrs. Hopwood declared she had never laughed so much before,—and poor Hopwood nearly choked himself in endeavouring to prove to his guest the sincerity of his mirth. Mr. Sniggles remarked, *en passant*, “What an infinite advantage social talent was to those in public life!” an observation which Mr. Hopwood echoed with great emphasis.

“What a fund of wit and entertainment he possesses!” whispered Mr. Sniggles to Mrs. Hopwood, in a voice loud enough to be heard by the individual he alluded to.

“Remarkable!” returned the lady.

“Was there ever any thing so good?” observed Hopwood, following up the same remark as Sniggles.

“The best I ever eat!” said old Grayling

aloud,—mistaking the object of praise.—“ A bit of fat—thanky’e.”

If the hospitable host could have stabbed the old fishmonger to the heart with a *coup d’œil*, Grayling would certainly have dropped at that instant from his chair ; but the callous old gourmand was invulnerable to every thing in the way of common rebuke—his feelings could only be touched by taking his plate away.

Georgina said but little, although Mr. Bouverie frequently addressed her. Each time he spoke to her she felt the colour rise to her face ; and the confidence she had felt on many occasions, while conversing with others, appeared quite to have forsaken her. In vain she reasoned and remonstrated with herself—it was of no avail. The feeling of diffidence and uncertainty which his presence occasioned was not to be shaken off.

In the meantime the dinner was removed, and the dessert arrived, and Hopwood was impatient till he could give his wife the signal to

withdraw. His mind was filled with the "important disclosure" which his friend Sniggles had promised to elicit from the guest during the after-dinner conversation. But upon Mrs. Hopwood's proposing so early to retire, Mr. Bouverie would on no account permit it. He entreated the ladies to remain a little longer; and of course the slightest intimation of a wish from so great a man was with them not to be combatted. Hopwood, however, contrived to afford his coadjutor an intelligent hint, that he might proceed to the task at once; and the wine passed round freely, as a further incentive to a confidential intercourse.

"What an extraordinary time we live in!" observed Sniggles, after a slight pause, and with great gravity, but giving Hopwood a sly wink, by way of information, that the game was about to commence.

"Wonderful!" said Hopwood, earnestly. "Look at the railroads:—I hear that the Emperor of Russia is a great promoter of railroads," he added, looking at Mr. Bouverie.

“ Really!” returned the other, with diplomatic reserve; “ I have not read the papers lately.” The two confederates looked at each other intelligently.

“ Yes, sir,” continued Sniggles, “ we owe it all to the rapid increase of liberal opinions; but—” he added hastily, turning to Mr. Bouverie, as if he had spoken without thought;—“ but I hope, sir, my remarks do not offend you :—I trust they do not :—I should be sorry if any incautious word——”

“ Oh dear no, sir,” said the diplomatist, bowing: “ you spoke of opinions—if you mean, sir, that the increase of liberal opinions renders the times we live in more intelligent, I certainly agree with you,” he said with mock gravity, endeavouring to restrain a broad smile, which rose at Sniggles’s peculiar introduction of his subject.

Mr. Sniggles looked triumphantly at his friend at the bottom of the table. “ Yes, sir; we are much indebted to the present ministry ;”

continued Sniggles, who had for this occasion quite discarded his habit of quibbling and punning—he had undertaken the important task of unravelling the secrets of state, and he spoke with becoming dignity.

“Much indebted!” repeated Hopwood in a louder key, “we owe them every thing, sir,—everything! what do we not owe to the present ministry? Have they not given us the new poor law bill, and reduced our rates 50 per cent—we owe them our eternal gratitude, sir.”

“How I do love to hear politics!” here interposed by way of parenthesis, Mr. Hopwood’s intelligent helpmate. “It is so lively—so *very* amusing!”

“And yet the conservatives tell us that the further spread of democratic opinions will ruin the country,” observed Sniggles, bowing by way of assent to Mrs. Hopwood’s remark, and looking inquiringly at Mr. Bouverie.

“Why, I must say,” commenced Mr. Bouverie, whose countenance had assumed the true

diplomatic reserve, "I must say, sir, that I respect a people who think for themselves——"

"Nothing can be more noble!" observed Sniggles.

"Or more enlightened than such a sentiment!" exclaimed Hopwood eagerly.

"Nevertheless," continued the young man in a slow measured tone, "it must be confessed—hum—gentlemen—it must be accorded——"

"I understand you, sir," interposed Sniggles, acting the part of prompter to the supposed diplomatist, "I clearly understand you—that it depends generally speaking—that is to say——"

"Nothing *can* be more just!" remarked Hopwood emphatically; "nothing can be more clear than my lord's—than, I beg pardon--than Mr. Bouverie's remark—it carries conviction—one seldom hears any argument more convincing!"

"You understand me then, gentlemen;" proceeded the diplomatist, playing with his dessert knife, as if abstractedly;—his hearers were in breathless attention. "We must not deceive

ourselves—hum—the times are replete with—hum—there is much to be said—hum——”

“There is, indeed,” observed Sniggles, shaking his head profoundly, and sighing as if he had the sins of the nation at his heart.

“Enough to make one’s hair stand on end !” continued Hopwood, in the same lugubrious strain ; balancing his knife between his fingers in imitation of his guest, and assuming a look of political profundity, as if he knew more than he cared to speak.

“And yet I am not one of those,” continued the young man, “who think—who feel—who entertain—hum—and then mistaking a system—hum—fall back upon primitive errors ; no, gentlemen,” he said, looking round, and speaking with impressive solemnity—“these are not *my* opinions !”

“Nor mine !” added Sniggles.

“Nor mine !” said Hopwood energetically, at the same time letting his knife fall on the

floor ; then stooping to regain it, capsized his plate, and broke it.

Mrs. Hopwood darted an angry look at him, which he took care not to meet.

“Ah ! gentlemen, if we could at this moment peep into the cabinets of Europe, how different—yes, I repeat, how different would the case be,” added Mr. Bouverie slowly and sententially.

“Egad ! sir, you are quite right,” said Sniggle’s, on whose countenance the importance of the subject was impressed. “Very right, indeed ! nothing *can* be more true.”

Hopwood inclined his head almost to the table, as if what had been uttered was conviction itself, and he cast a glance towards his coadjutor significantly, as if he thought they were upon the eve of a grand disclosure, and feared to interpose a word, lest he should interrupt the current of thought which was evidently forcing its way through the capacious brain of the diplomatist.

Georgina cast a sly look at Mr. Bouverie, who seemed at that moment absorbed in the importance of his subject ; for she was not the most simple-witted of maidens, and could only believe, from what she had heard, that he was amusing himself at the expense of her respected parents and their friends ; a pursuit so congenial to her own fancy, that she was extremely amused at its progress. The extreme gravity of Mr. Bouverie's countenance, however, somewhat baffled her, and she waited to hear the *denouement*.

“ If we cast our eyes towards Spain,” said the supposed member of the cabinet, “ what do we see ? hum——”

Hopwood and Sniggles shook their heads mournfully.

“ Again, if we look at Russia—hum—what do we gather from that ?”

“ True, very true,” added both gentlemen despondingly——

“ But France, ah !” and sinking his voice to

a whisper, as if he feared the very walls should catch the accent, “that is what I would speak of—hum—that is the point on which—hum—”

The two friends, at this point of interest, were leaning over and holding their breath, fearful of losing a single precious word—when old Grayling, not understanding a single syllable of what was going on, reached over the table to possess himself of the port wine—Hopwood’s best—which had been standing untouched for the last quarter of an hour—when his capacious sleeve unluckily touched a long-necked bottle, and over it went, spouting out its blushing contents over Georgina’s face and neck, like water from the hose of a fire-engine. The young lady gave a faint scream, and would have fallen back with fright, had she not been supported by Mr. Bouverie.

Everything was now in confusion.

“O Mr. Grayling!” ejaculated Mrs. Hopwood, “how *could* you do so? how *could* you do so? at the same time jumping from her seat,

and essaying to dry Georgina's face and neck with a table napkin. Georgina, after the first surprise was passed, was exceedingly inclined to laugh—but not so those around her;—Hopwood thumped the table with frenzy, whilst Sniggles looked at his friend, with a ludicrous affectation of despair.

“What a brute,” ejaculated the latter to his friend, in a low key, whilst Mr. Bouverie was engaged assisting the ladies.

“Monstrous, monstrous, indeed,” sighed Hopwood; “I shall never forgive myself for inviting him; such a critical point.”

“The state secrets about to be laid open,” whispered Sniggles, “I may say, unreservedly.

“To interrupt *such* a conversation, at *such* a moment,” said Hopwood, almost sobbing.

But the placid Grayling, totally regardless of the irreparable mischief he had caused, helped himself very composedly to the port wine he had reached, and stammered something intended as an apology to Georgina, who quickly

assured him no harm was done. Mr. Bouverie laughing, made some pleasant remark *en passant* to the old gourmand, which gave the cue to Sniggles.

“It’s the first *spirited* burst my friend Grayling ever made,” said Sniggles, and he tittered, half afraid of indulging his humour on a subject so fatal as this had proved; but the old habit was too strong upon him; “eh! old crab-fish?” he added, and he facetiously poked the old fishmonger under the ribs with the point of his knife, causing him to spill his upraised glass of port wine over his trowsers and the carpet. Sniggles was, however, quickly recalled to a proper sense of his duty, by a withering look from the ex-jeweller, whilst the original culprit, would undoubtedly have been annihilated by a similar demonstration of contempt and scorn, from the lady of the house, had he not been occupied in refilling his glass, and tossing it quickly off to prevent accidents.

Georgina, under the pretence of still drying

her face, was biting her handkerchief to prevent an explosion of mirth, and Mr. Bouverie was looking over the blind into the garden, doubtless with a view to obviate a similar exhibition.

During this state of things, the ladies withdrew, and Mr. Bouverie begged to be allowed immediately to join them.

In the drawing-room, Mr Bouverie seemed to be entirely engaged conversing with Georgina, who having recovered her composure, by the perfect ease and amiability of his tone and manner, now spoke with gaiety, and even ventured some sly sallies on the events of the dinner table. Her wit was not lost upon the young man, who began to entertain a much higher opinion of her, than he did at first, arising, perhaps, from her present unembarrassed manner towards him; whilst Georgina, on her part, became more in love with him than ever.

Vain was every attempt made by Sniggles to renew the conversation, thus unhappily

broken off. Mr. Bouverie appeared disinclined to enter again on the subject. In vain did the conspirators call into requisition an old newspaper; he evidently did not understand the hint; he was talking to Georgina about music, drawing, and plants.

“This is shocking,” whispered Hopwood.

“Deplorable!” ejaculated Sniggles, with a most rueful visage; “upon the very point of discovery, and now not a word—not a syllable—ugh!”

“I wish that infernal Grayling was——” and, without finishing the pious ejaculation intended for that respectable friend’s benefit, the countenance of the wrathful, though deeply injured head of the family, assumed the appearance and complexion of a withered codling.

Shortly after, Mr. Bouverie excused himself from staying late, and took his departure, to the inexpressible mortification of the two keen-witted plotters, leaving the secrets of the cabinet still unrevealed, and his own rank and character still shrouded in mystery.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Patience and sorrow strove
Which should express her goodliest.”

MR. BOUVERIE was not long walking the distance between Mr. Hopwood's villa and Beverley-house, and he met Agnes within a short distance of the gates. She had seen Mr. Bouverie approach, and had advanced to meet him.

Agnes had been seated at the open window, with her bonnet and shawl on, for some time, impatiently expecting him; for he had promised that evening to be explicit with her; to tell her of himself and his prospects; in fine, to relieve her mind from a load of anxiety. She expected the promised interview of that

evening to be the climax of her hopes or fears. Her young heart had never before acknowledged the influence of love, and her tender and susceptible nature increased to their full force all the feelings, painful and otherwise, of which the "gentle passion" is so fruitful a source. Indeed, in her limited intercourse with the world, she had seen but few whom she could even respect; Mr. Bouverie, therefore, appeared to her as a being of a superior order. From their first meeting, he had paid her the most marked attention; and at their last interview, it will be recollected that he had confessed his attachment to her in unequivocal terms—an attachment which she repaid with all the gratitude of a youthful heart's first affection. It was a most disinterested passion on both sides; for they stood under peculiar circumstances with each other; neither knew the other's position in life, and from all that had passed, indeed, neither appeared to care. It is true that Mr. Bouverie, meeting her as he

did, and seeing her mother's establishment, could not have the remotest notion of her real position in life, and which position, indeed, Agnes, although considering her mother's conduct with regard to her quite inexplicable, was far from supposing to be otherwise than what the world calls respectable. Nevertheless, she felt some uneasiness at an explanation, which she knew must sooner or later take place, and to which Mrs. Maxwell would of course be a party.

At the moment of meeting Mr. Bouverie, however, all these considerations were for the time forgotten. The pleasure of seeing him, and the knowledge that he had left the dinner-party—a party where Georgina would have it in her power to be as amiable as she pleased—and so early, to see her, banished her more sombre reflections. She was quite elated to think that for this time Georgina's witcheries had lost their spell, and the pleasant feeling of hope regained the ascendant in her mind.

“And you have come at last,” cried Agnes, extending both her hands. “I know it is early to leave a dinner-party ; but I have been sitting at the window looking down the road for some time :—and how is Georgina ? Did she say anything about me ?”

“She is very well,” returned Mr. Bouverie ; “but we had no opportunity of talking much ; her parents were so intent on learning the secrets of diplomacy. But you look pale, dear Agnes,” he added with interest, taking her arm, and walking with her towards the house.

“I am well,” she said, “but I have been all alone to-day ; the Major and Mrs. Caisson are gone, and I feel almost deserted.”

“But your mother ?”

“Oh, she is in London, and possibly may stay some time. When she goes on business, she frequently stays a week or ten days,” replied Agnes.

“Does she never take you with her ?” asked Mr. Bouverie.

“Never !” After some little hesitation, she added, “You will think it strange, Mr. Bouverie, but from your kindness in taking an interest for me, I must confess to you, although painful to do so, that my mother is unhappily prejudiced against me ; for what reason it is quite impossible to say.”

“Strange !” exclaimed Mr. Bouverie. “You surely cannot have given her cause ; your years and disposition forbid such a thought.”

“I have been at school almost all my life, and have scarcely ever seen her,” returned Agnes ; “and since I have been at home, I have mostly been to myself—my mother never inquires for me. I have made many endeavours to conciliate her, but in vain ;” and her voice faltered, as she added, “I fear you will think she has some reason in my conduct ; but she has not, indeed she has not.”

“I am sure she cannot, my dear, kind-hearted Agnes,” said Mr. Bouverie, in gentle accents. “It is, doubtless, one of those extra-

ordinary freaks of our nature on which it is vain to attempt any explanation or reasoning. Time and circumstances may, perhaps, induce her to think differently. But come, we will not dwell on subjects which must be painful. I must tell you my evening's adventure at Mr. Hopwood's." And he gave her a long and humorous account of the events of the dinner, and of the manner in which he left the curiosity of the party unsatisfied. Knowing the peculiarities of the respectable Mr. Hopwood, Agnes felt highly amused at the recital.

"But, my dear Agnes, I intended to talk seriously to you this evening," continued Mr. Bouverie, "and we must not allow this opportunity to pass. I am a few years your senior, and in knowledge of, and intercourse with the world, considerably more so. I will therefore take upon me to advise, as well for you as myself; but I will first explain to you something of my situation in life, that you may have a proper confidence in me."

“ Oh ! I cannot have greater confidence in you than I have at this moment,” exclaimed Agnes. “ Let me understand you as my heart teaches. Such serious explanations frighten me.”

“ But, my beloved girl, at present you do not know me,” said Mr. Bouverie ; “ my position—my prospects—”

“ I seek not to know—I care not to know,” said Agnes. “ Here, by your side, I am happy.” A certain feeling of fear came over her, as he wished to explain farther of himself—of fear, lest he should prove greater than she dare aspire to. A few minutes since she was most anxious that an explanation should ensue ; and now she dreaded it as something that would bereave her of hope.

“ Why, my dear Agnes, I am not an ambassador, and am not at all intimate with the prime minister,” he said, laughing, and half divining the reluctance of Agnes. “ I have nothing very wonderful to disclose ;—it is but a mere

matter of every-day life;—you must be informed at some time.”

“ True,” she said; “ very true—but I am very weak and foolish.”

“ No, no; it is merely the natural timidity of your age,” said Mr. Bouverie; “ but I must tell you that I have been to town this morning, and completed an arrangement which is most important to me; for it will comparatively release me from a profession which I dislike.”

“ O, you do belong to a profession then?” said Agnes artlessly.

“ If it may be called so—I belong to the army,” replied Mr. Bouverie. “ You, of course, have heard of Captain Laurence, who is about to marry Miss Charlotte Vernon; I am in the same regiment with him; and I expect the Gazette to-morrow will announce his promotion to the majority, and mine to the vacant company. Now it is my earnest wish, after securing that step, to retire to a quiet country life; and I have been negotiating such

a proceeding with a most respectable man of business, a confidential adviser of Mr. Vernon's, who, on my accidentally mentioning my wishes, suggested a plan, which, although somewhat irregular, is certain, and will effect my object, without my having occasion to seek assistance from relations, who would be decidedly hostile to such a step. Such, my dear Agnes, is the first part of my plan ; and the second is, though chief in my heart, to ask you to share what I possess ; which, though not brilliant, will be sufficient."

Agnes was silent for a few moments, but her hand trembled in his grasp.—“ I should be so happy,” she faltered ; “ it is my dearest wish to possess your—your good opinion.”

“ Dear Agnes,” he said tenderly, “ say rather of my love—you have it—you deserve it—and it will be my greatest happiness to merit a heart so valued as your own.”

“ Here is my mother, I declare !” exclaimed Agnes, starting up, and looking anxiously to-

wards the road; "that is certainly her carriage."—Mr. Bouverie arose hastily, for they had entered the house, and were seated at the parlour window, which was open. He was for a moment irresolute, whether to await Mrs. Maxwell's arrival, or to write to her on the subject of Agnes next day; but quickly decided on the latter.

"Dear Agnes," he said, as he pressed her hand with affection, "inform your mother of what has passed immediately she arrives; and say, that I shall write for permission to wait upon her in the morning. Till then, God bless you." As he reached the hall-door, the carriage had drawn up, and Mrs. Maxwell was descending the steps. She looked up, seeing a stranger, and recognized Mr. Bouverie; but what was his surprise, as he lifted his hat to her in passing, in the mother of Agnes, to identify the equivocal agent of the morning! He passed on, however, without manifesting any sign of recognition; and Mrs. Maxwell as-

cended to the hall with hurried steps and perturbed manner, followed more slowly by a gentleman, who, on disembarassing himself of his ample cloak, proved to be Mr. Robinson, the solicitor.

When Mr. Bouverie met Mrs. Maxwell that morning, for the purpose of making a definitive arrangement respecting the advantage of her interest in his behalf, he considered that he was treating with a lady—the wife, perhaps, of some person of influence, who, having occasion for a sum of money—perhaps to make some purchase, or to cover some deficiency,—might have made, for once, this use of her influence to raise it. He knew such things had been done, and although not of frequent occurrence in these times, still it was not a solitary instance of indirect patronage. The introduction, and, in fact, recommendation of so respectable a man as he had every reason to believe Mr. Robinson to be, forbid any suspicion that he could be the contemplated victim of a low intrigue, which, if

successful against him, the irregular nature of the transaction would prohibit him from noticing publicly. But when he found that the lady of influence was Mrs. Maxwell, of whom he had already heard some whisperings in Egham, though regard for Agnes forbad him to listen to them; when he found it was through Mrs. Maxwell his appointment was to be looked for; he at once relinquished the hope—conceiving it could only be attained, if at all, through some tortuous or disreputable channel. He was aware that Mr. Maxwell was not in a situation in life to command influence: whatever influence Mrs. Maxwell possessed, must therefore be suspicious. Mr. Robinson's conduct seemed to require explanation; but he little knew the wily solicitor's address in these matters. He was grieved beyond measure to be thus awakened from his security, and still more on account of poor Agnes than on his own. It was with these unexpected and tormenting reflections passing in his mind, that he overtook two gentlemen

walking towards Egham, one of whom spoke to him as he was hastily passing, and who was no other than Mr. Hopwood. He was walking part of the way with his friend Sniggles, whom he had been entertaining at his house since Mr. Bouverie's departure; the strange mystery attending him having been a fertile subject for their ingenious speculations.

"Mr. Bouverie, I declare!" said Mr. Hopwood.

"From the Green, I suppose, Sir," said Sniggles, who was rather elated with his host's brandy and water. "Beverley House stands pleasantly,—thought we should have had the disposal of it when Lord Beverley left,—but Mrs. Maxwell was too quick—snapt it up, Sir, before we had a chance of knocking it down;—that is to say, not exactly Mrs. Maxwell, but my Lord ——."

"Sniggles! Sniggles!" interposed Hopwood reproachfully, "you forget Mr. Bouverie."

“ O, I beg pardon—a thousand pardons,” stammered Sniggles; “ I meant no insinuation.”

“ I trust my presence is no restraint, Mr. Hopwood,” observed Mr. Bouverie; “ I have not the pleasure of being acquainted with Mrs. Maxwell.”

“ So I should suppose,” observed Mr. Hopwood drily.

“ My dear Sir, you speak enigmatically,” said Mr. Bouverie.

“ Why, Mr. Bouverie,” returned the retired man of business, “ you are a stranger here; and, as I have had the honour to receive you as a visiter, perhaps it is my duty—excuse the liberty I take—as the subject is mentioned, perhaps it is my duty to a gentleman of rank and connexion—and one I hope to have the honour of calling my friend—to say, that the conduct of Mrs. Maxwell is most mysterious—pardon me if I offend.”

“ A distress in the house, only a week ago, for £12 taxes,” interposed Sniggles.

“ But I think I understood from my good

friend the Major, that Mr. Bouverie was intimate with the family," continued Mr. Hopwood.

"No, indeed," replied Mr. Bouverie; "I have met Miss Graham many times, and have certainly considered her a very charming young person."

Mr. Sniggles coughed.

"If the conduct of Mrs. Maxwell is open to doubt," added Mr. Bouverie, "certainly that of her daughter—if, indeed, Miss Graham be her daughter—is free from suspicion."

Mr. Hopwood made no reply.

"It would be cruel," continued Mr. Bouverie, "to visit the irregularities of a mother upon an innocent young creature. Sir, I say it is cruel to look upon Miss Graham with distrust, because her mother may give cause for scandal."

"Scandal!" cried Hopwood; "I know what I should think if Lord —— (but I must not mention names) were he to make my wife a present of a mansion, and furnish it at an expense of ——."

“ Three thousand seven hundred and forty pounds, seventeen shillings; Crooks and Leggat showed me the invoice,” interrupted Sniggles.

“ Well, sir, what you say is doubtless on good authority,” said Mr. Bouverie, with apparent indifference, though his inward emotions were far from enviable, on finding his suspicion of Mrs. Maxwell realized to their fullest extent. “ Still no liberal mind would attach any unpleasantness from these things to Miss Graham. Poor girl, she claims our warmest commiseration in having the misfortune to belong to such a parent.”

Neither Mr. Hopwood nor his companion made any reply.

“ You are silent, gentlemen,” continued Mr. Bouverie, with the pertinacity of one who is not satisfied unless he receives an unequivocal assent to what he has asserted.

“ Why, really Mr. Bouverie, I am sorry we have touched on this subject,” said Hopwood; “ if I speak, I fear I risk giving you offence.”

“ Indeed, sir, you need not fear that,” said Mr. Bouverie.

“ Then, my dear sir, if you will give me leave to speak plainly, I think you deceive yourself with regard to that young lady,” said the ex-jeweller.

“ Indeed, Mr. Hopwood ! You surely do not mean to say Miss Graham has any knowledge of her mother’s conduct ?” said Mr. Bouverie, with warmth.

“ Pardon me, Mr. Bouverie, what I am about to say is from my own personal knowledge,” replied Mr. Hopwood. “ I do not wish to injure the young lady ; indeed, I have never noticed the circumstance to any other than my friend Sniggles.”

“ Not a word from me,” interrupted the auctioneer—“ mum’s the word !”

“ But as you appear to be deceived,” continued Hopwood, “ I think it my duty ——”

“ Pray, my dear sir, tell me—what do you know ?” interrupted Mr. Bouverie, impatiently.

“Returning to my house one evening with the major, we unluckily disturbed a very pleasant *tit-e-à-tite* between Miss Graham and the major’s nephew, Mr. Hervey, and in a most retired spot—the lane which flanks my garden. Would you believe it, sir—an assignation under my very windows—the abode of innocence and purity—an assignation, sir!”

“Stay, Mr. Hopwood,” said Mr. Bouverie, stopping short in the road, and confronting him—“did I hear rightly?”

“Mr. Bouverie, I am not given to romance: I am a plain matter of fact man,” continued Mr. Hopwood; “the major was with me, and witnessed it. Judge the feelings of a father, sir, to see the companion of his child in such a situation. I heard her very words to him—I upbraided her for outraging the asylum of innocence. She has never been in my house since, sir, and I never intend she shall. It was no accidental meeting, sir, but in the lane, by the gate of my garden. Since then I find

her mother is a notorious woman, sir—notorious !”

“ O, very !” hiccupped Sniggles.

“ Those are the facts, Mr. Bouverie,” continued Mr. Hopwood more calmly ; “ you can judge for yourself.”

Mr. Bouverie continued his walk ; his feelings could scarcely be suppressed ; anguish preyed at his heart.

“ Mr. Hopwood,” he said, slowly and with effort, “ your situation in life, and respectable character, forbid me to suppose you can utter anything but truth ; much less that you, a father yourself, could wantonly traduce the character of a young, and, as I have believed, a virtuous-minded girl. But, sir, it is well to know the truth, and I thank you, though, I care not to conceal how painful it is to me. I wish you a good night, sir ;” and, bowing slightly to Mr. Sniggles, he walked hastily on, leaving Mr. Hopwood and his companion at the door of the King’s Head.

Agnes rose next morning early ; she had evidently passed a sleepless night, for her eyes were swollen with weeping. She had encountered her mother the evening before on the departure of Mr. Bouverie, whose flushed cheeks, and angry glance, told her that something had occurred on the instant more than ordinary. She made hasty inquiries respecting Mr. Bouverie, on which Agnes related the circumstances of his being there ; Mrs. Maxwell then assailed her child with a torrent of coarse invective ; accused her of having conspired against her interest—that she was ruined by her—and in fact carried her fury to such a pitch, that poor Agnes was obliged to seek refuge from her violence.

It was fortunate the solicitor was present, for he succeeded, at last, in procuring peace. Mrs. Maxwell, however, forbid her daughter ever to appear in her presence again, and insisted that on the next morning she should quit her house.

It was under these painful circumstances, that Agnes arose the next morning, without a home, and without a friend whose protection she could claim. From what transpired on the night previous, she could gather from her mother something of a prior knowledge of Mr. Bouverie, and that her own intimacy with him had affected her mother's interest. If she went from her present home, she knew not whither to direct her steps; and remain she could not—indeed, she dare not—for she knew well the implacability of her cruel parent. Whilst pondering in her mind what course she should pursue, Mr. Jabez Hunsman approached her.

“Well, Miss Agnes,” said Mrs. Maxwell's major-domo; “pretty tantrums your mother has been in about this ere friend of yours; it's spoilt her game; howsomever, no fault of yours neither, as I can see—only accident; but then she is such a precious tartar, and no mistake.”

Agnes could make no reply to this very eloquent harangue, but with tears.

“Come, that’s of no use ;” continued Jabez, you know I brought you up, and I look on you as more my child than I do her’n. I’m thinking what’s to be done, for you can’t stay here, nohow. My eyes, if she catches you here when she gets up, she’ll turn the house out o’ windows ; but she is such a rum un. I’m thinking d’ye see, as you had better go to London, to my wife for awhile, till something is done.”

Agnes was grateful even for this appearance of kindness, so friendless was she, and forlorn at that moment ; and she expressed her sense of the obligation.

“Why, as for the matter of that,” said Jabez, “you owe *me* precious little, I can tell you, but you may find friends where you don’t expect ; it may be sooner, or it may be later, only I can tell you one thing,” and he whispered in her ear ; “I am getting sick of your Beelzebub of a mother, and no mistake about that either. Now do you do as I tell

you, and you'll see something mayhap turn up arter all. Now don't cry, there's a good gal, and mind what I say ; I'll send you your traps arter you in the course of the day ; stage starts at half-arter-nine."

Just as Agnes, was about to depart a servant put a letter into her hands ; trembling, she broke the seal ; the letter contained but a few lines ;—

" I have deceived myself—I neither blame nor reproach you ; but never expect to see me again. On my return home last night, I met Mr. Hopwood—I will not wound your feelings by repeating the cause of your continued absence from his family.

" EDWARD BOUVERIE.

" *To Miss Agnes Graham.*"

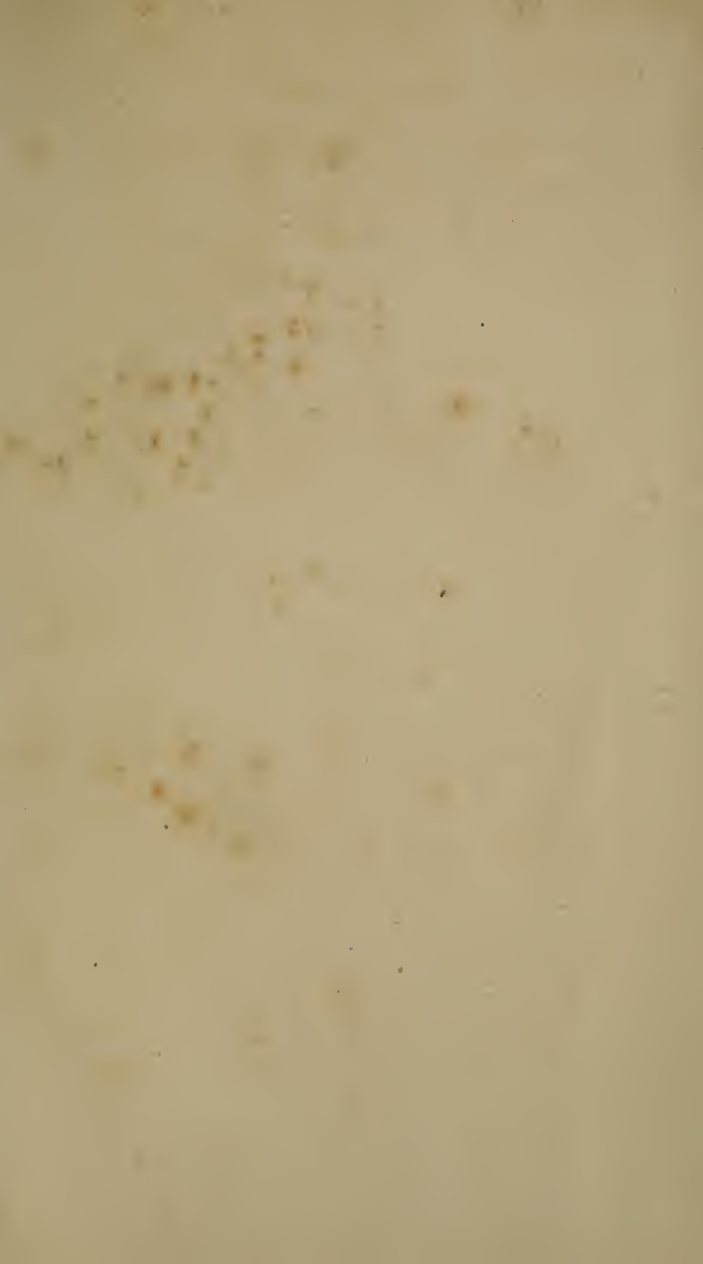
Her hand dropped listlessly to her side, as the poor girl read these, to her, cruel lines. This was a climax to her misery she had but

little expected ; her eyes streamed with tears, as she folded the note, and placed it in her bosom ; then alone, and almost broken-hearted, she quitted her mother's roof to seek another asylum.

END OF VOL. II.

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